

GRAND CANYON

Final Writing Credits:

Written by Lawrence Kasdan & Meg Kasdan

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Story
by
Lawrence Kasdan and Meg Kasdan

Screenplay
by
Lawrence Kasdan

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FADE IN:

EXT. PLAYGROUND (SOUTH-CENTRAL LOS ANGELES)

A BLACK AND WHITE PICTURE, like an abstract painting-- dirty white field, random blotches of grey, a blackish line across the bottom of the frame.

The muffled SOUND of a HELICOPTER, as though distant, slowed-down. Once it's established--

MUSIC begins. Steady, driving. HELICOPTER SOUND fades.

THE TITLES BEGIN.

EXT. PLAYGROUND (SOUTH-CENTRAL LOS ANGELES) -- DAY/DUSK

Now, in SLOW MOTION, a shape enters the frame from above. Because the image is still BLACK AND WHITE, it takes a moment to recognize the shape as a spinning BASKETBALL. It hits the blackish line at bottom of the frame--the rim of the hoop--and bounces upwards. The slowed-down REVERBERATING THWANG of the hoop.

Now, two sets of HANDS enter from below, reaching for the rebound, fingers spread. The ball is grasped above the rim, slow as a dream, and taken down out of frame.

Still SLOW MOTION, still BLACK AND WHITE, a mass of bodies, BLACK MEN and BLACK BOYS. We're in tight, the shapes close. Sweat. Muscles. Grimaces.

CAMERA MOVES through the swirling figures.. One of the players is older, a big man, thicker than the wiry, flying teens. He is SIMON. The CAMERA MOVES right past his head, toward the perimeter of the court. Other Players wait their turns, Kibbitzers, sassy Young Girls.

CAMERA FLOATS through them, along the fence that borders the playground. Outside the fence, Young Kids glide by on bikes, two Mothers talk over a stroller. An Old Man stares at the basketball game, mesmerized, his fingers locked tightly around the chain-linked fence.

CAMERA VEERS CLOSE to the fingers, then up OVER the fence to the intersection. Street life in the dusk. At the far corner, a drug transaction concludes and a car pulls away. The Teenage Dealer drifts back to his friends, a handful of BOYS, wearing their colors and their sneakers.

ONE OF THE BOYS separates from the group and steps to the curb to stare across the street at the basketball game. This boy, sixteen years old, is OTIS.

OTIS' P.O.V. The game. Picking out Simon. Someone shoots. Simon boxes out his opponent and leaps--

CLOSE ON the backboard again. Still SLOW MOTION, BLACK AND WHITE. The ball bounces off the rim and goes up. Simon's large, strong hands reach, straining. But the ball eludes him. And bounces a second time on the rim. At the moment it touches we CUT TO:

INT. FORUM -- NIGHT

3

In COLOR now, NORMAL SPEED. CLOSE ON the fiberglass backboard. A ball has bounced up off the hoop and four sets of HANDS reach for it above the rim. One set grabs it strongly and SLAMS IT loudly down through the basket.

The Crowd ROARS. The Players pound their retreat.

IN THE GOOD SEATS, sits MACK, a white man of forty. These aren't his seats. They belong to the man next to him, DAVIS, who leans close to shout something to Mack. Mack nods. Davis returns his attention to his young girlfriend, VANESSA.

A beautiful Woman, dressed like an expensive call girl, glides along the aisle in front of Mack. His gaze follows her until he comes upon another Beauty, of angelic purity, floating in the opposite direction. A Laker steals the ball and the crowd erupts. Mack doesn't know where to look.

THE TITLES END.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE (BRENTWOOD) -- NIGHT

4

CLAIRe, Mack's wife, sits cross-legged on the big bed surrounded by two calendars (different sizes), a date book, and list-filled legal pads. CNN plays quietly on the TV.

ROBERTO, their fifteen year-old son, comes into the room. His long hair and tie-dye tee-shirt look straight out of 1968. He is carrying a paperback, his place held with his thumb.

ROBERTO
Dad should be home soon. The game just ended.

CLAIRE
I thought you were studying for your English exam.

ROBERTO
(holds up book)
I was. I had the game on the radio.
Can you pick me up tomorrow at 4:30?

Claire's face screws up as she consults her calendar and datebook, then makes an entry on her list.

CLAIRe

Four-thirty. Behind the school?

(Roberto nods)

I thought you were going to get a ride occasionally.

ROBERTO

I try. It's just really hard to arrange to leave at exactly the same time with somebody.

CLAIRe

It's really hard for me to plan my whole afternoon around picking you up. I'm working at the senior center tomorrow.

ROBERTO

If you can't do it, I can try to find a ride. It's kinda late, but...

(Claire looks at him,
shakes her head)

Thanks.

CLAIRe

Did you get your history final back?

ROBERTO

(trying to remember)

No.

(he looks at her array of
schedules)

Mom, I think you need to get organized.

Claire smiles, then leans back to regard him.

CLAIRe

Do I mercilessly ridicule all your habits?

ROBERTO

(heading out)

Not mercilessly...I've got to make a phone call.

He walks out. Claire chews on her pen, rocking gently.

EXT. FORUM PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

5

Mack, Davis, and Vanessa move through the crowd to Davis' Ferrari Testarossa, parked in the VIP lot. Davis BEEPS the car alarm--lights blink, door locks WHIRR. Davis is talking so loudly that people glance at him. Mack is a little embarrassed by it.

DAVIS

(to Mack)

I'm just asking you to hear yourself. Listen to what you're really saying under what you think you're saying. Control, control, control! When you gonna realize that nothing can be controlled? We live in chaos. It's the central issue in everybody's life.

Mack opens the passenger door for Vanessa. She sinks down out of sight. Davis and Mack face each other over the top of the car.

DAVIS

Look around you, Mack. Everybody in this parking lot is struggling for control. And do you know what they're trying to control, each and every one of them?

(Mack is unresponsive)

Fear! They're trying to control their fear.

MACK

Thanks for the game, Davis.

Davis smiles and slides down into the driver's seat. Mack bends way down to look into the car as the windows come down. He pecks Vanessa on the cheek.

DAVIS

You're my best friend, Mack. This is important. Let's talk tomorrow.

VANESSA

Goodnight, Mack.

MACK

Goodnight, Vanessa.

DAVIS

I have more to say about this.

MACK

(to Vanessa)

Why is it, when someone's successful in one field, they think they know about everything?

Vanessa shrugs. She understands. Davis ignites the jet engines.

DAVIS

Drive carefully!

They pull out. As the BLAST of the Ferrari FADES it is replaced by the ROAR of a HELICOPTER close overhead. Mack looks up. The helicopter veers over the parking lot and into the night.

EXT. CITY STREETS--NIGHT

6.

Mack's Lexus is in the thick of the Forum exodus traffic. He gets stopped in a line of cars far back from a big intersection.

INT/EXT. MACK'S CAR--NIGHT

7

The RADIO is playing and Mack is unconsciously lip-synching with the song. His trance breaks and he becomes aware of how long he's been sitting here. He spots a side street on the right and squeezes the car over to turn off the main drag.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

8

Mack's car comes up to a corner and takes a confident left. But at the end of that block he seems more tentative before turning right and disappearing.

INT./EXT. MACK'S CAR -- NIGHT

9

He's peering at the street signs A little disoriented. At a corner, he stops. Worried now. He turns off the radio and does a U-turn in the intersection, heading back to re-trace his route.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

10

A Black Man in a service uniform is getting out of his car in a driveway. He watches as Mack's Lexus goes cruising down his block and stops at the corner. After a moment it turns right.

INT./EXT. MACK'S CAR -- NIGHT

11

He drives down the dark street, craning to peer down each side street. Now he sees something and relaxes.

MACK'S P.O.V. Beyond two blocks of darkness is a brightly-lit main drag with some light traffic.

EXT. HAMBURGER STAND STREET -- NIGHT

12

Mack heads toward it.

AT THE INTERSECTION. There's some activity here. Mack isn't sure which direction to take. He watches as two Children around ten and eight, leave a hamburger stand and head off into the latenight gloom. Mack shakes his head and takes a left onto the main drag. A carload of Black Teenaged Boys passes him fast; several faces turn to look at him.

MACK
(singing softly)
"Roland was a warrior, from the land
of the Midnight Sun..."

INT./EXT.MACK'S CAR (STALLED CAR STREET)-- NIGHT

13

Mack hopes he's going in the right direction. He leaves the business section and enters a stretch with fewer lights.

THE CAR DIES.

Mack pumps the gas, urges it forward with body-english, then uses the last bit of momentum to roll the car to the curb. A car HONKS and veers around him. Mack glances skyward and takes a deep breath. He tries the ignition. The engine WHINES its regrets.

MACK
Fuck fuck fuck fuck!

Mack hits every part of the car he can reach.

He looks out at the surrounding neighborhood. Not good. He picks up the car phone at his side and punches in 4-1-1. Waits.

OPERATOR
Operator 522. What city, please?

MACK
Yeah, I need Triple A for, uh, I
don't know...let's say Inglewood.

The PHONE COUGHS ELECTRONICALLY and goes dead.

MACK
Hello?.. Operator?

Mack presses buttons.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH--NIGHT

14

Mack is in the booth, on the phone. He is sweaty and out of breath; he's run several blocks back from his car. He leans out of the booth to squint at a street sign across the way.

MACK
Yeah, 24th Avenue. But remember, its
about a half mile...west, I
guess...of there.
(listens)
Yeah, I understand -- but no, see, if
you take that long, I might be like
'dead.'

MACK (CONT'D)

(listens)

The police?...Hmmm...Oh shit, no.
Nothing's happened. Just get the
truck here as fast as you can, okay?

He hangs up and heads back toward his car, jogging as casually as possible. Something catches his eye across the street.

MACK' POV. The car full of Teenaged Boys goes by in the opposite direction.

Mack keeps going.

INT. ROBERTO'S ROOM--NIGHT

Roberto is on the phone. MUSIC plays on the stereo

ROBERTO

What? Is he out of his mind? Does he
really mean these things he says?

(listens)

Yeah. I know. But is everyone insane?
It's looking more and more like that
to me, like everyone is completely
nuts.

Claire comes in the room and motions to Roberto. Roberto covers the receiver.

CLAIRe

Dad is late. He may be trying to
call.

ROBERTO

He'll try the second line.

CLAIRe

Look, I'm worried. It's late anyway.
Get off the phone!

Roberto makes a face.

ROBERTO

(into the phone)

You know what we were just talking
about? Well, it's here. I gotta go.

Roberto hangs up.

ROBERTO

Calm down. Maybe he went to get
something to eat with Davis.

CLAIRe

Is it possible for you to just once
do something because I ask you?

ROBERTO

What are you yelling at me for? He's
a big boy. Christ, what are you like
when I'm a little late?

CLAIRe

You don't want to know.

She leaves.

EXT. MACK'S CAR (STALLED CAR STREET) --NIGHT

16

Mack sits in the car at the side of the road. Other cars speed by.
Now one comes by much slower. It is the one full of Teenaged Boys.
They give him a good lookover but continue on.

INT./EXT. MACK'S CAR (STALLED CAR STREET) --NIGHT

17

Mack watches the Boys' car move away. Again he tries the ignition.
While it's WHINING, he tries the power window switch--nothing. His
window stays down. He cranes to look back up the road for some
sign of a tow truck. He turns back and sees something he doesn't
like.

MACK'S POV. It's hard to see at first in the darkness and the
blinding glare of the headlights, but it looks like-- yeah, it is--
the car full of Boys is coming back again fast on the other side
of the road.

When they pass him, Mack watches them in his sideview mirror. Up
the road, they swing to the right, wait for traffic to clear, and
pull a big U-turn.

MACK

(softly)

Mayday! Mayday! We're going down!

The car pulls up directly behind Mack's. Five Boys pile out. The
lead kid, ROCSTAR, comes up to Mack's window with two others, WIPE
and JIMMY.

ROCSTAR

Hey, man, you need some help here?

WIPE

This is a nice car, mister. Is this
one of them new Jap cars?

MACK

Yeah.

ROCSTAR

Yeah, you need some help? Or yeah,
this is a Jap car?

MACK

Thanks, but I already called the
police and Triple A.

JIMMY

You called the police? What, on that
phone there you called all
those people? Who else you call, your
mama?

WIPE

I like this car. I could use a car
with a phone in it.

ROCSTAR

Maybe you want us to give you a ride
somewhere or something? You want a
jump-start or something?

WIPE

(laughs wildly)

Yeah, man, how 'bout a jump-start?

The other Boys think this is funny too. The one hovering in front
of the car SLAMS his fist down on the hood. Mack jumps.

JIMMY

He nervous. What you so nervous
about, man?

WIPE

Maybe he's carrying, Jim. Maybe he's
afraid we gonna bust him.

A car slows down as it passes them. An OLDER BLACK WOMAN rolls
down the passenger window.

BLACK WOMAN

Leave that man alone!

Mack and the Boys all look at her, but the car just keeps on
rolling away.

WIPE

(yells after)

Okay, Grandma, whatever, baby!

ROCSTAR

Why don't you get out of the car,
mister?

Mack looks up at Rocstar. For the first time there is something
hard in his eyes. He shakes his head "no".

ROCSTAR

(leans into the car)

You want me to have Jimmy take you out of there?

(Mack just looks at him)

How about this? Do you ever want to get out of the car again?

With that, Rocstar pulls aside his warm-up jacket indicating something. Reluctantly, Mack looks there. There is a .38 revolver stuck in the waistband of Rocstar's sweats.

MACK

Look, what do you want? You want my wallet? You want my watch? It's a shitty watch, you're welcome to it.

ROCSTAR

What I want is you get out of the car.

JIMMY

C'mon, let's get this over with!

Mack looks down for a moment, trying to collect himself.

ROCSTAR

Now, motherfucker.

Mack swings open the door with enough irritation to make Rocstar step back into the road. A car HONKS at him as it speeds past. Jimmy and Wipe step back reflexively; they're edgier than they seemed.

Mack steps out of the car with an unhappy look. What happens now? AND THEN IT HAPPENS, THE MIRACLE --

A BIG TOW TRUCK comes barreling alongside Mack's car, barely missing the group standing by the passenger door. It CRUNCHES expertly onto the gravel shoulder in front of Mack's car. Immediately, with tremendous authority, it backs up to within inches of the Lexus' front bumper. The boy who was standing up there has to jump out of the way to avoid losing his legs.

Mack and the boys wait with equal interest to see what will emerge from the cab.

The driver's door flies open in the flashing lights of passing headlights and Simon swings out. He looks even bigger in his grey uniform than he did on the basketball court. In his right hand, very easy, he's gripping a huge tire iron.

The boys are disappointed; they would have preferred something a little smaller and whiter. Mack, on the other hand, is pleased.

SIMON
Which one of you called for the truck?

There is a moment of silence while the boys evaluate things.

MACK
Uh, me. That was me. This is it,
uh...It just sorta died on me here...
I'm the one who called.

SIMON
(smiles)
I guess it was you, huh?

MACK
Yuh.

ROCSTAR
Hey, man, we was doing fine here.

SIMON
(ignores him, to Mack)
Is it the battery?

MACK
Huh?

SIMON
Were you stopped and it wouldn't start again?

MACK
No. It just died on me.

Simon is already moving to the back of the tow truck. He lays down the tire iron and starts wrangling the heavy stinger and wheel retainers..

SIMON
Gonna have to take it in.

Jimmy and Wipe look to Rocstar for leadership.

ROCSTAR
(to Simon)
You dissing me ,man?

WIPE
You bet he is. You're saying it now.

ROCSTAR
Is that right? You dissing me?

SIMON

(continues to work, but
looks up)

No, I'm not. Nothing like it. I'm doing a job here, fella. This is how I earn my living. I just ride out there and do the job. I want it to go just as smooth as can be. I don't like it to be any harder than it already is.

(to Mack, pointing)

You want to make sure you're in neutral and the parking brake is off?

Mack nods and moves to the driver's door of the Lexus. Jimmy is in his way. Mack steps around him and gets in the car, shifts gears.

JIMMY

That's shit. You're talkin' shit, man.

Mack gets out of the car and comes around front. Simon has the stinger under the bumper of the Lexus and now works the winch, boom, and throttle levers at the back of the truck. They make a loud WHIRRING sound. The front of the Lexus lifts.

SIMON

(to Mack)

Get in the truck. You'll have to ride up with me.

Mack steps that way. Wipe puts a hand on his arm. Mack shakes it off and looks at Wipe.

SIMON

(to Rocstar)

Are you the one I'm talking to?

ROCSTAR

(nods, then looks around)

We all decide what goes down. So don't fly that shit.

JIMMY

Yeah, fuck you.

SIMON

Am I talking to the right man?

(Rocstar acknowledges
that)

That's what I thought.

Simon steps over and puts his arm around Rocstar's shoulder, dwarfing the boy. He walks him away from the others and speaks quietly to him.

SIMON

Look, I gotta ask you a favor. I gotta ask you to let me go my way here. That truck is my responsibility. And now that the car is hooked up to it, I'm responsible for that too. If any shit comes down now, it's my ass. You follow me?

ROCSTAR

Do you think I'm stupid? Just answer me that first and we can talk.

SIMON

(shakes his head)

I don't know nothing about you. You don't know nothing about me. I don't know if you're stupid or some kind of genius. But I know this-- I gotta get out of here now. And you got the gun.

(Rocstar looks up sharply)

...So I'm asking you a favor, for the second time...let me go my way here.

ROCSTAR

(looks up at him a long moment)

I'm gonna grant you that favor. And I'm gonna expect you remember this if we ever meet again.

Simon nods and starts to turn away.

ROCSTAR

But first you gotta answer one more thing for me. And you gotta tell me the truth.

(Simon agrees, gravely)

Are you asking me a favor as a sign of respect, or are you asking me a favor because I got the gun?

Simon suddenly looks weary. He leans in close to Rocstar.

SIMON

Man, the world ain't supposed to work like this. Maybe you don't know it, but this ain't the way it's supposed to be. I'm supposed to be able to do my job without asking you if I can. That dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you ripping him. Everything's supposed to be different than it is.

ROCSTAR
So what's your answer?

SIMON
You don't have that gun, we ain't having this conversation.

ROCSTAR
That's what I thought, man. No gun, no respect. That's why I always got the gun.

Simon turns back to his truck and motions Mack in. Rocstar gives his boys the sign to let them go. Wipe spits in the direction of the retreating Mack and joins the other boys, who are suddenly in a hurry to get in their car and go. They are out of there before Simon has the truck in gear.

INT/EXT. TOW TRUCK --NIGHT

18

Simon pulls the truck onto the road. Mack watches Simon's big hands work the gears. He's not sure what to say.

MACK
Thanks.

Simon accepts that. They are silent for a little while.

MACK
You saved my ass.

WE SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. (FLASHBACK TO 1987) --DAY

19

We can barely tell where we are. A very busy, very sunny street. We're in someone's POV looking directly across to the opposite corner, cars slowing for a red light. SUDDENLY A BUS ROARS BY, FILLING THE FRAME JUST INCHES AWAY. WE CUT BACK TO:

INT/EXT. TOW TRUCK --NIGHT

20

Simon looks over at Mack, who is now staring out into space.

MACK
I was about to be really unlucky, then you showed up.

SIMON
We both got lucky. It coulda gone different.

MACK
(nods, looks out the window)
What's going on in the world?

SIMON
This neighborhood has gone to shit.

MACK
This country has gone to shit.

SIMON
My sister and her kids live near
here.

EXT. TOW TRUCK, STREET --NIGHT

21

The truck rolls away as we CRANE UP past the street lights and PAN OVER the lights of the neighborhood and, in the distance, downtown skyscrapers. A POLICE HELICOPTER skims over the nearby rooftops, its huge spot light beaming down intermittently, as though from a flying saucer.

EXT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE (SOUTH-CENTRAL LOS ANGELES) --NIGHT

22

We're in a neighborhood now, the CAMERA STILL FLOATING, down a block, across the street, up the sidewalk. A car goes by with RAP MUSIC playing loudly, then it is quiet again, and dark.

The houses are small, bungalows really, with tiny yards in front. We're moving toward one particular one now, Deborah's house. Like its neighbors, its state of disrepair only becomes obvious when you get close. As we drift over the low fence in front, the BEAM FROM THE POLICE HELICOPTER floods the yard and moves on, as does the ENGINE ROAR.

We're on the porch now. Some sad furniture. The windows have bars over them. The green door is made of heavy metal; it's old, dented, the paint peeling. A SIREN passes a few streets over.

INT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE --NIGHT

23

We're moving through the tiny interior now. It's airless, claustrophobic in here. There is a little girl, KELLEY, asleep on one of the two twin beds crowded into the little bedroom.

In the living room, the television is playing softly, a re-run of a sitcom. On the sofa, asleep with a magazine on her chest and the remains of a drink on the floor by her hand, lies DEBORAH, Simon's sister. She looks very pretty like this, in repose, her face relaxed as it never is in wakefulness. She's wearing a cotton nightshirt.

There is the slight CREAK OF A FOOTFALL on the front steps. Deborah is instantly awake. She doesn't move. She hears the JINGLING of familiar keys, then the TURNING OF THE DEADLOCKS. Deborah's face shows a weary relief.

Otis, Deborah's son, comes in and locks the door behind him. He goes to the refrigerator and pops a Coke as he talks. Deborah watches him move about as she rouses herself slowly from the sofa.

OTIS

Hey, Mom.

DEBORAH

How ya doing, baby?
(Otis shrugs)
What time is it?

OTIS

11:30. What's up?

DEBORAH

What's up?
(yawns, thinking)
Kelley's gonna be in the Girl Scouts
next year.

OTIS

Yeah?

DEBORAH

Have to get her a uniform.
(holds her forehead as she
gets vertical)
I'm going to bed.

As she crosses to the bedroom, she intercepts Otis and kisses him on the forehead.

DEBORAH

Sleep tight, baby.

She steps into the bedroom and closes the door behind her. Otis reaches into the darkness behind the sofa and pulls out a pillow and a sheet, which he tosses on the sofa. He strips to his tee-shirt and underpants and sprawls back on the sofa with his soda. He picks up a remote control and switches the set to ESPN Sports Center. They're reporting the night's NBA games. They finish with a report of the Bulls game and start the footage from the Laker game at the Forum.

We CUT IN CLOSE on the game footage. As we PULL BACK, we are now--

INT. MACK'S HOUSE (DEN) --NIGHT

24

IN THE DEN, Roberto is watching the same sportscast as Otis, draped over the den sofa in an almost identical adolescent sprawl. The

phone RINGS. Roberto's hand flashes out with practiced speed to snatch it up.

ROBERTO
Hello.

CLAIRe
(a split-second later)
Hello!

MACK
Hi, guys.

INT. MACK'S HOUSE (MASTER BATHROOM) -- NIGHT

25

IN THE MASTER BATHROOM, Claire is standing over the sink, soap on her face, phone to her ear.

CLAIRe
Mack, what's wrong?

MACK
Nothing. I'm fine. The car died on me.

ROBERTO
Where?

MACK
Down near the Forum.

ROBERTO
Oh shit.

CLAIRe
Roberto.

ROBERTO
Sorry.
(to Mack)
On Manchester?

MACK
No. Like an idiot, I took a short-cut and got all turned around. You've never been where I broke down.

ROBERTO
Oh shit! Are you out of there now?

WE BEGIN TO INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GAS STATION --NIGHT

26

Mack on the phone in the office of the station. The Lexus is in one of the garage bays, its hood up. Simon is in the distance, talking to one of the Mechanics.

MACK

Yeah, I'm at a gas station.

CLAIREE

(relaxing)

Good.

ROBERTO

You're lucky you got out with your life. That coulda been curtains, Dad.

CLAIREE

(grimaces)

Roberto, could I talk?

ROBERTO

See you tomorrow, Dad.

MACK

Goodnight, pal.

(Roberto hangs up)
Claire, I don't know how long this is going to take.

CLAIREE

Do you want me to come and get you?

MACK

Nah. If they're not going to do it, I'll take a cab. Go to sleep. I'll tell you all about my adventure in the morning.

CLAIREE

Adventure? What happened? Are you all right?

MACK

I'm fine. Go to bed, honey. I love you.

They hang up. Claire rinses the soap from her face and disappears into her face towel. Her vigorous rubbing suddenly slows down and she lowers the towel, lost in a thought.

EXT. GAS STATION --NIGHT

27

Mack and Simon sit on the curb in front of the office, each with a can of soda.

SIMON

...You can go swimming in the ocean every day and be perfectly cool, you know? Then one day...just one particular day... you bump into The Big Shark. The Big Shark don't hate you. He's got no feelings for you at all. You look like food to him. I mean, you don't hate a hamburger, do you?

(he takes a drink)

Those boys back there, they don't hate you. They ain't political. But they don't feel anything, either. They don't feel guilty. They got no right and wrong, outside of their group. And they got nothing to lose.

(Mack looks at him)

And if you happen to be swimming along and bump into them, well...

A muscular Black Biker on a Harley uses the gas station to cut the corner between streets, loudly.

SIMON

But it might not be worth worrying about. It's like being in a plane crash.

MACK

That's comforting. I'm glad you brought that up. Seems like all I think about lately is dying.

SIMON

I've been there.

MACK

Just seems to be so many ways to buy it. Particularly in this city. I'm amazed anyone's alive at the end of each day.

(looks around)

Then other days, I think that maybe people aren't so fragile, and maybe things have always been kind of brutal. And people just keep on going.

SIMON

Ever been to the Grand Canyon?

MACK

(shakes his head)
I always meant to go.

SIMON

I was there. Only takes about six hours from here.

MACK

I know. We were planning to take my boy.

SIMON

How old is he?

MACK

Fifteen.

SIMON

Fifteen? He probably won't want to go with you now. Probably go with his friends, his chick now. You missed that boat. What's his name?

MACK

Roberto.

SIMON

Roberto?

MACK

(smiles)

Named for Roberto Clemente.

SIMON

No shit.

(he gives Mack a look)

Man, you get yourself to the Grand Canyon.

MACK

Beautiful, huh?

SIMON

Oh yeah, it's pretty all right. But that's not the thing of it. You can sit right on the edge of it, you know. I did that. I did everything. I went down in it, I stayed overnight down there. But the thing that got me was sitting on the edge of that big old thing. Those rocks, man, those cliffs and rocks, they're so old. It took so long for that thing to get to look like that. And it ain't done, either. It happens while you sit there watching it. It's happening right now, while we're sitting here in this ugly town.

Simon finishes off his soda and shoots it neatly into a garbage barrel twenty feet away. It makes a HUGE BANG.

SIMON

And when you sit on the edge of that thing, you just realize what a joke we people are. What big heads we got thinking what we do is gonna matter all that much. Thinking our time here means diddley to those rocks." It's a split-second we been here, the whole lot of us. And one of us? That's a piece of time too small to get a name.

MACK

You trying to cheer me up?

SIMON

Those rocks were laughing at me. I could tell. Me and my worries. It was real humorous to that Grand Canyon. And you know what I felt like? I felt like a gnat that lands on the ass of a cow that's chewin' its cud next to a road that you ride by on at 70 miles an hour.

MACK

(laughs)

That's small.

SIMON

Yeah, that's small.

They both laugh. Mack offers Simon his hand.

MACK

My name's Mack.

SIMON

(shakes his hand)

Simon.

EXT. CITY STREET --NIGHT

28

A big public BUS comes careening around the corner at the end of the block and speeds directly AT CAMERA.

INT/EXT. BUS --NIGHT

29

A vicious bus-hijacking is taking place. There are two rotten Thugs at the front of the bus, SKIN and SCAR. They're waving their automatic weapons at a dozen terrified PASSENGERS. Now Skin, who is clearly unhinged, turns and screams at the BUS DRIVER--

SKIN

I said right! I told you left, you scum-sucking pig!

BUS DRIVER

I'm sorry, mister! I heard you wrong.

Skin raises his automatic to the side of the Bus Driver's head as the CAMERA PUSHES IN to exclude the driver. Skin fires a BLAST.

The Passengers SCREAM and react in horror. Scar looks back that way; the sight seems to excite him. (WE BEGIN TO NOTICE the flash of temporary splices between the cuts.)

The bus swerves wildly. Skin heaves the Bus Driver's body into the well by the door and takes the steering wheel.

The Passengers are thrown from their seats. This enrages Scar even more--

SCAR

I TOLD YOU NOT TO MOVE!!

Scar opens up his AK-47 on the off-screen Passengers as WE CUT TO:

INT. SCREENING ROOM (FOX LOT) --DAY

30

DAVIS' FACE, almost as crazed as Scar's.

Davis rises from his seat and turns on the assembled Editors and Assistants.

DAVIS

Where's the shot?

EDITOR

What shot?

DAVIS

(explodes)

The brains-on-the-window shot! The viscera-on-the-visor shot!

EDITOR

Davis, we thought we'd show you--

DAVIS

Put it back! Don't show me anything!

EDITOR

(pointing to the screen)

You're not even watching. You don't need it, but you're not even giving it a chance.

DAVIS
How is the rear view mirror joke
going to work without it?

The Editors obviously hate that bit too. When Davis speaks, he is *
sincerely exasperated-- *

DAVIS
Am I the only one here who respects
the writing?

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT --DAY

31

Early morning. Forty-five Kids of various ages are being loaded out to camp. Some are scared and tearful, others gleeful at the impending freedom. The Parents, too, have mixed emotions. Camp Counselors are hurrying the Kids onto a Greyhound-type bus.

Roberto, who is ecstatically happy, gives Mack a hug and a kiss. Mack, like most of the fathers, is dressed in tie and shirt for work.

ROBERTO
When I get back from camp, I'm going
to practice driving every time we get
in the car.

MACK
That gives me a month to relax.
(Roberto laughs)
Have a great time, pal.

ROBERTO
You too. I'll write a lot.

MACK
(laughs)
Yeah.

Roberto turns to embrace Claire, who is a lot more emotional about this than the boys.

ROBERTO
You've got 15 seconds to tell me all
the mother stuff one more time.

CLAIRE
(teary, laughs)
Sunscreen, hat, allergy pills, summer
reading, floss. Watch for poison oak,
lime ticks, bears, dragons,
pestilence.

(touches his face,
memorizing the sensation)
Just be careful, okay? Write if you
need anything.

ROBERTO
Mom, I'm going to camp, not the army.

CLAIRES
I love you, sweetheart.

ROBERTO
(hugs her once more,
whispers)
Me too. Be happy.

Roberto hurries off to the bus. Mack puts his arm around Claire.

MACK
(singing softly)
"He's leaving home, bye, bye..."

She elbows his ribs.

MACK
I gotta go. Are you okay?
(she nods, wiping her nose)
I'll call you later.

Mack heads off to his car. The big bus fires up and wheels out of the parking lot. The Parents disperse in record time. Another CAMP MOTHER passes Claire.

CAMP MOTHER
Whew!

CLAIRES
I feel like this is training for him moving out in a couple years.

CAMP MOTHER
For who, you or him?

CLAIRES
It looked pretty easy for him.

CAMP MOTHER
(heads for car)
Hello, freedom!

Claire is slow enough to go to her car that she is the last person in the parking lot. She sticks her key in the door and stops. WE TILT UP FROM THE KEY TO CLOSE ON CLAIRE'S FACE and FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, BARRINGTON AVE. (1977) --DAY

32

Claire, thirteen years younger, straps a two year-old Roberto into a baby seat in a 1975 Ford.

CLAIRe

Okay, Robby, are you ready for an adventure? We're going to figure this town out, you and me. You ride shotgun.

She closes the passenger door and goes around to sit behind the wheel, opening a Thomas Book of street maps. She puts her finger on a spot, then places the open book across the baby seat.

CLAIRe

It's Fairfax north of Third. You navigate.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT --DAY

33

BACK TO PRESENT: Claire gets in her car and starts it. As she pulls OUT OF FRAME--

EXT. PARKING LOT (MELROSE AVE.) --DAY

34*

Davis pulls into a spot and gets out of the Testarossa. He BEEPS the alarm and the car does its number. Davis turns around and is suddenly facing, out of nowhere, a ROBBER. He is a slim Hispanic with wild eyes and he is pointing an ugly revolver at Davis' chest.

DAVIS

(blurts)

Oh, fuck! You scared the shit outta me.

ROBBER

(motions with gun)

Dwatch!

DAVIS

(confused, looking around)

What? The car? You want it, you got it.

Davis proffers the keys, which are still in his hand. The Robber jumps back and FIRES. Davis is hit in the thigh. His leg goes out from under him and he's suddenly on the asphalt, a pool of blood forming. Davis is in enormous pain; he writhes, about to go into shock. But the Robber does not go away. He leans down and grabs Davis' wrist. The gun, still in his hand, waves toward Davis' face.

ROBBER

"I told you to give me the watch, asshole. You were stupid."

He rips the Rolex from Davis' arm. Davis MOANS LOUDLY.

ROBBER

Hey, you're lucky. It's only a flesh wound. On TV that don't even slow you down.

The Robber runs away. Davis squirms on the asphalt, looks down at his leg. He has wet himself. The blood continues to spread. Davis vomits, and then passes out.

INT. OPERATING ROOM, CEDARS SINAI--DAY

35*

The Wound. It's being worked on by a team of medical personnel and is therefore open for our inspection in all its horror, a sickening mess of blood, flesh and shattered bone.

CLOSE ON Davis' face as he lies on a table in the emergency operating room. DOCTORS and NURSES move about him, sometimes blocking our view. Their passage is highlighted by the bright red of bloody gloves, sponges, and gowns.

Davis drifts in and out of consciousness and hears the talk around him in fragments, AS DO WE:

VOICE 1

...the bleeding under control...
just barely...this guy was
lucky...he's down three quarts...

VOICE 2

...What have we got here?...

VOICE 3

...Yes, sir, gunshot wound to the thigh. Bone, muscle, and arterial damage..

VOICE 2

...Is he conscious?...

VOICE 4

...in and out. Looks like he's coming out right now...How you doing there, friend?...

VOICE 3

...severed the sartorius muscle, the anterior gracilis, and partial trauma to rectus...Nurse, sponge...

VOICE 2

...femoral artery?

VOICE 3

...uh huh...and the profunda and the
external circumflex...

VOICE 2

...Jesus. What a mess...What's
that?...Did the femur just
shatter?...

VOICE 5

(a new voice, weird)

...see if it's even possible to save
the leg here...

Davis reacts to this last. Did he really hear that? He tries to * lift his head. A HAND comes in to wipe his forehead and ease him back down.

OMIT SCENE 36

SCENE 36 OMITTED (CONT'D)

EXT. BRENTWOOD STREETS --DAY

37

Claire is jogging. Her togs are nothing fancy; on top she wears an over-sized tee-shirt. She runs with a distracted intensity, as though the running were about something quite different than fitness. As though it kept her from sinking down or going mad. We TRACK with her a LITTLE LONGER THAN WE EXPECT TO.

Claire rounds a corner and begins running along a row of thick shrubbery. Now, she HEARS SOMETHING, or thinks she hears something. She continues to jog, but slows her pace a little. She stops hearing whatever it was, but she can't quite let it go. Surprisingly, she runs in a big loop and heads back along the shrubbery.

CLOSE ON CLAIRE'S FACE as she runs along. She HEARS THE SOUND again. Now that she realizes she's not crazy, she becomes even more concerned. She slows to a walk and begins to peer into the bushes. WE BEGIN TO HEAR THE SOUND now, too. It is the faint CRYING OF AN INFANT.

CLAIRES POV moving slowly along the bushes. Stop. There it is, through the leaves. Moving closer now, parting the branches. A tiny BABY, wrapped in a dirty blanket, lies on the ground beneath the branches. It is CRYING, weakly.

Claire looks. At first, she cannot move. Then she reaches down and, very gently, takes the Baby into her arms. There are bugs crawling on the Baby's face and in the folds of the blanket. With an odd calm, Claire begins to pick them off.

EXT. CLAIRE AND MACK'S STREET --DAY

38

Claire is carrying the Baby in the folded up front of her tee-shirt. A Neighbor drives by, honks and waves merrily. Claire turns, as if to call out. But doesn't. She watches as the Neighbor drives away. Claire is left alone with her secret. She heads on down the street.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM, CLAIRE AND MACK'S HOUSE --DAY

39

Claire is tenderly soaping the infant in the sink. She MURMURS to the Baby, quietly and continually.

INT. KITCHEN, --DAY

Claire cradles the Baby in her arms and slowly spoons milk into its mouth.

INT. STORAGE CLOSET --DAY

Claire moves a step ladder into place and climbs up to reach the top shelf. Arrayed before her are a row of neat boxes, each carefully labeled. She takes hold of one that says "BABY CLOTHES--1-2 YRS." and begins to work it off the shelf.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM --DAY

AN OVERHEAD SHOT. Claire has the Baby in the center of the big bed. She has pulled a large assortment of clothes and cloth diapers from the box and spread them around. She takes her time picking out a sleeper, holding up several for the infant, asking for opinions. Her steady MURMURING has become musical. In fact, she doesn't know it, but she's softly SINGING.

INT. MACK'S OFFICE --DAY

Mack is an Immigration Lawyer in a practice with two other specialists. His offices are comfortable, but not lavish. Right now, he's sitting behind his desk facing a client, a man with a heavy eastern European accent named KRONICEK.

KRONICEK

...In Milano I learned the art of custom shirtmaking. I gained respect even though I was a foreigner. But I was always a foreigner. I thought that in Italy I would find a free society, where each man is taken for what he is and not told what he is by the state. But when some of the Italians became my friends, I learned that their society is made up of ancient classes, and a man is not permitted to move from one class to another. I knew then that my original dream was the only dream and I must continue to pursue it. I must come to America.

Mack nods, encouraging.

KRONICEK

This is the only country in the world where any man can be anything, and no man is looked down upon because of where he comes from.

KRONICEK (CONT'D)

Here all the people are wishing only
the best for each other and the
government is a helpful government,
with a love for its people.

Mack is going through changes here. He seems about to raise an objection, then changes his mind.

KRONICEK

Since I was very little, my
grandfather told me about your great
country and from that time, I knew I
must come here.

Mack waits a moment, unsure whether Kronicek is finished.

MACK

I see. Well, let's talk about the
situation with your visa. Then, I can
give you an idea about what legal
options you've got.

KRONICEK

You are my lawyer now. I have hired
you.

MACK

Well, let's talk a little first.
After you've heard what's involved,
you may decide--

KRONICEK

I want to stay.

MACK

(looks, a beat)
Right.

EXT. BACK PATIO, CLAIRE AND MACK'S HOUSE --DAY

44

Claire rocks gently in a big wicker chair, the sleeping Baby in her arms. Claire seems at first to be in a trance, staring at the trees in the backyard, HUMMING unconsciously. But now she looks down at the Baby. Suddenly, Claire begins to cry.

The telephone on the table next to her RINGS. Claire snatches it up quickly, so as not to wake the Baby, but does not immediately take the receiver to her face. First, she wipes her cheeks on the sleeve of her shirt, then takes a deep breath. When she speaks, she sounds almost normal, but whispery.

CLAIRe

Hello.

MACK

Honey?

CLAIRe

Hi, Mack.

MACK

How you doing?

CLAIRe

Good. I'm having a good day..

MACK

Why are you whispering?

CLAIRe

Am I whispering?

(looks down at Baby)

I guess I'm feeling quiet. I'm
sitting out back.

MACK

I talked to Davis.

CLAIRe

How is he doing?

MACK

Terrible. I guess the bullet just
tore the shit out of everything.
Apparently, it's going to take
something like six months to recover
and then he may have a limp. They're
not sure.

CLAIRe

That's awful.

MACK

I can barely hear you, honey.

CLAIRe

I said that's awful.

MACK

Yeah. Listen, do you still want to go
out tonight?

CLAIRe

Uh, no. We can't. I don't feel like
it. I'll make something here.

MACK

Good, I don't want to.

CLAIRe

Let's stay home. We'll just be together.

MACK

I like the sound of that. Gotta go.

CLAIRe

Mack...

MACK

Yeah?

CLAIRe

Don't work late.

MACK

I won't. Bye, baby.

He hangs up. Claire replaces the receiver and looks at the Baby.

CLAIRe

(whispering)

Surprise, surprise.

INT. MACK'S OFFICE --DAY

45

Mack has just hung up the phone. His secretary, DEE, a pretty girl in her twenties, comes into the office with a file. The door closes behind her. Mack watches her closely as she crosses the room and comes around the side of his desk to lay the file squarely in front of him.

MACK

Who's up?

DEE

Mrs. Flores and her three sons.

Mack sighs.

MACK

Then what?

DEE

At 3:30, Mr. Duk.

MACK

Mr. Duck?

DEE

(smiles, pronounces it
correctly)

Mr. Duk.

MACK
(pronounces it correctly)
Mr. Daffy Duk?

DEE
You're awful.
(Mack nods, looking up at
her)
That's why I can't stand you.

She reaches out and takes his hand from the top of the desk. She just stands there holding it for several beats as they look at each other. Then she walks out of the office.

EXT. SIMON'S APARTMENT, EAST OF LA BREA -- DAY

A46*

Simon hurries into the apartment house, carrying three grocery bags. *

INT. SIMON'S APARTMENT, EAST OF LA BREA (KITCHEN) --DAY

46

Simon comes in. He's wearing shorts and a tee-shirt. And he's running late for something. He quickly pulls the perishables from the bags and stows them in the refrigerator. He leaves the rest of the stuff in the bags and rinses his face in the kitchen sink.

The apartment is old and run-down, but it's of decent size and Simon, who lives here alone, keeps it neat.

INT. SIMON'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) --DAY

47

Now he crosses to a table in the living room and sits down, kicking off his sandals. On the table, next to the telephone, is a TTY machine, a keyboarded gadget for making telephone calls to the deaf. (The conversation is printed out on an LCD screen.) Simon dials a number on the phone and punches buttons on the TTY.

SIMON
(on machine)
Annie?

ANNIE
(on machine)
Hi, Daddy! What's the haps?

Simon laughs and reacts to the conversation, which happens SILENTLY, with the LCD printout appearing in an EXTREME CLOSE-UP of the TTY screen.

SIMON
How's my girl today?

ANNIE
Still deaf.

SIMON
Why aren't you out on date, beauty?

ANNIE
It's only 9:30 in D.C. I don't go dancing 'til midnight on school days.

We CUT BACK to a SHOT OF SIMON and the conversation is now printed out across the bottom of the frame, like a subtitle.

SIMON
What's with school?

ANNIE
Big A on Poetry paper, B- in Psych.

SIMON
Econ. test?

ANNIE
Does not transmit. Trouble on line.

Simon laughs out loud.

SIMON
Aunt Deb sends her love.

ANNIE
Kelley?

SIMON
Good. Joining Girl Scouts!

ANNIE
Otis?

This stops Simon. He seems about to type a reply, then hesitates.

ANNIE
Oh-oh.

INT. SIMON'S APARTMENT (KITCHEN) --DAY

48

LATER. THE KITCHEN. Simon comes back in and begins to unpack the rest of his groceries. He puts some cans up in a cabinet and then turns back toward the kitchen table. He stops. It's very quiet here. Simon idly strokes his own cheek, almost tenderly. He looks at his finger tips, then strokes his face again.

INT. SOUP RESTAURANT --LATE DAY

49 *

An attractive black woman in her thirties named JANE sits in a booth finishing a salad. Across the table is the picked-over remains of another salad. Now Dee returns to the table carrying a steamy bowl of soup and a plate of bread from the cafeteria-style serving area. She sits down, moving aside the salad plate and pushing the bread plate into the center as a communal dish. Jane looks at the bread and laughs, declining it. This is a

familiar gambit between them. She watches Dee take a spoonful of soup.

JANE
How is it?

Dee gives a facial review.

DEE
So?

JANE
What?

DEE
Come on, don't give me a hard time.

JANE
Dee, nobody knows less about men than me.

DEE
You've done all right.

Jane snorts. She breaks off a little piece of a roll from the bread plate and takes a tiny bite. With a hand gesture, Dee encourages her to get on with it.

JANE
Okay, let me ask you something first.
Do you like your job?

DEE
I know what you're going say--

JANE
Because you can just kiss it goodbye.
It never fails. I can absolutely guarantee you that the thing ends with you losing your job. And not because you're the Missus now, living in the big house. Don't think that's-

DEE
I don't think that! I wouldn't even want that. Give me a little credit, will you? One of the things I think is so great about him is how devoted he is to his wife and kid.

JANE
You are so full of shit, you know that?

JANE (CONT'D)
(Dee looks up sharply)
Oh, you may not even know it, but you
are. You're saying what they all
say...at first. I've seen it so many
times, honey.

She leans toward Dee and tears off some more of the roll.

JANE
If he's so devoted to his wife,
what's he doing messing around with
you.

DEE
He hasn't done anything--

JANE
(skeptical)
You told me you were holding hands
and getting soulful today.

DEE
Big deal. I shouldn't even have told
you.

JANE
You got to tell someone this shit.
That's how you know it's really
happening. It's too goddamn lonely
otherwise.

Dee pushes away her soup bowl.

DEE
We must be going about this whole
thing wrong or something.

JANE
Which thing?

DEE
The love thing. The touch thing. The
thing where there's someone to touch
you...real nice and gentle.

JANE
It doesn't have to be too gentle.

DEE
Whatever.

Jane starts gathering up her purse.

" JANE
Are we going to this movie or are we
going into a deep funk?

DEE
Either one's okay with me.

Jane is halfway up when she suddenly stops and looks at Dee. She slides back down onto the bench.

JANE
Dee, have you gone and done it with this guy already?

Dee makes a denying face, but it's hard to tell.

DEE
Jane, do you ever feel like you're just this far--
(fingers an inch apart)
--from being completely hysterical twenty-four hours a day?

JANE
Half the people I know feel that way.
The lucky ones feel that way.
The rest of the people are hysterical twenty-four hours a day.

EXT. MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE (FRONT WALK) --LATE DAY

50 *

Mack gets out of the Lexus and goes up to the front door. The day's mail is lying in a pile on the step.

INT. FRONT HALL --LATE DAY

51 *

Mack comes in, puts his things on the hall table, and begins glancing through the mail.

MACK
Claire! I'm here.

Claire comes to the top of the steps.

CLAIRe
Hi, Mack.

MACK
You never brought in the mail.
There's something here from Carol.

CLAIRe
Mack, come on up here. I want to show you something.

Mack finally looks up from the mail. He leaves everything and heads up the stairs. Claire waits for him at the top and when he reaches her, she puts her arms around him and kisses him, a real one.

MACK
Is something wrong?

She shakes her head, kisses him once more and leads him by the hand into the master bedroom.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM --LATE DAY

52 *

Claire leads Mack over to the bed. He is about to sit down on it, imagining the most romantic explanation, when she stops him. She puts her fingers to her lips for "quiet" and points to a jumble of blanket in the center of the big bed.

It takes Mack a second to sort out what he's looking at. When he spots the Baby sleeping in the center, he smiles reflexively. The conversation starts in WHISPERS.

MACK
Whose is it?

CLAIRe
She's beautiful, isn't she?

MACK
(agreeing)
Is that the Wilson kid?
(Claire shakes her head)
Who?

CLAIRe
I don't know.

Mack digests this. It takes a few beats. He looks again at the infant, then back to Claire. He's not sure he's got it yet, but he thinks he's going to hate it when he does.

MACK
What do you mean?

CLAIRe
I don't know who the parents are.

MACK
(voice a little louder)
Come on, Claire, don't make me guess.
Where'd it come from?

Again, Claire puts her finger to her lips. This upsets Mack more. With a last glance at the Baby, he leads Claire from the room.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM --LATE DAY

53 *

Mack deposits Claire on the closed toilet seat. He takes off his jacket and starts pulling off his tie.

MACK
What's the story?

CLAIRe
I found her. I was jogging and I heard this crying and I looked--

MACK
(sits on the tub)
Where is this?

CLAIRe
On Carmelina, just around the corner.
(Mack nods, "go on")
So I looked under the bushes and there she was. There were bugs crawling on her. And in this dirty blanket that was wrapped around her.

MACK
Where's the blanket?
CLAIRe
I threw it out.

MACK
(makes a face)
I'll get it out of the garbage.

CLAIRe
What for?

MACK
When was this?

CLAIRe
This morning.

MACK
This morning? What time?

CLAIRe
Around 9:30, I guess.

MACK
What did the police say?

CLAIRe
Hmm?

Now Mack knows for sure. He knew it right away, but he was hoping he was wrong. He's pretty calm.

MACK

My guess is that the police did not say "Hmm?". So I guess my next guess is that...you haven't called the police?

(Claire admits it)

You know, it's possible this baby was kidnapped and someone has been frantically looking for it all day.

CLAIRe

I don't think so.

(Mack gives her a look)

I could tell. But I listened to the news three times and there wasn't a thing about it.

MACK

Claire, that doesn't mean anything. They may not have announced it yet or they may be waiting to hear from--

CLAIRe

This baby wasn't kidnapped. I can tell you that, Mack. This baby was deserted by its mother and it's going to need a new one.

There's something strange enough in her tone to worry Mack.

MACK

Claire, are you okay?

CLAIRe

(irritated)
I'm fine!

MACK

Claire, you know we have to call the police right now?

CLAIRe

Of course. Mack, I haven't taken leave of my senses.

Mack accepts that, but continues to look at her.

CLAIRe

I just wanted you to see her. So I waited 'til you got home. That's all. She's so beautiful, I wanted you to see her.

INT. CEDARS-SINAI HOSPITAL --NIGHT

54

A Nurse walks toward us in SLIGHTLY SLOW MOTION. She reaches out her arms.

*

A Uniformed Cop and a Social Worker watch as Claire, with real difficulty, hands the swaddled Baby, which is crying now, to the Nurse.

*

Mack watches from a reception counter where he is filling out a long form. He puts down his pen and moves across the room, still in SLOW MOTION, to put his arm around Claire. They watch the Nurse retreat down the hall, Baby in her arms.

*

INT/EXT. MACK'S CAR --NIGHT

55

Mack and Claire ride in silence for a while. Finally--

CLAIRe

I told you that baby wasn't kidnapped.

Mack nods, but he does not look over at her.

EXT. INTERSECTION, DEBORAH'S NEIGHBORHOOD --NIGHT

56

Two cars full of teenagers slowly approach each other in the intersection. When they are abreast, there is friendly recognition between the two groups and SALUTATIONS that we can't quite make out. Then one car REVS UP and tears out. The second car moves slowly down the block PAST DEBORAH'S HOUSE.

INT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE --NIGHT

57

Simon has had dinner with Deborah, Kelley and Otis. Deborah and Kelley are cleaning up. Simon sits at the table with Otis, who is laughing.

OTIS

Come on!

SIMON

God's truth.

OTIS

No, man.

SIMON

I told him, I said "Mister, there's no way this vehicle is worth as much as you're gonna pay to tow it." But he didn't care. He tells me it's got "sentimental value".

DEBORAH

What's so funny about that? Maybe it did.

OTIS

(laughing hard)

Maybe he got his first piece in there.

DEBORAH

Otis! Watch your tongue.

Otis makes a contrite gesture, but he's still laughing.

KELLEY

What? What'd he say, Mama?

DEBORAH

Nothing, baby. Now bring me that pitcher and get out the wax paper.

SIMON

He told me when his wife ran away with his brother, he chased them all the way to Little Rock in that car.

OTIS

Did he catch 'em?

SIMON

Nope. Said he 'lost the scent' in Arkansas. Also, this was the car he was sittin' in the first time he was ever shot.

OTIS

(laughing again)

Man, he had some good times in there!

Deborah and Simon are laughing now, too, as Kelley climbs into Simon's lap.

KELLEY

Are we gonna play Roundy-Roundy,
Uncle Simon?

DEBORAH

It's time for bed, little girl.

KELLEY

One game! Come on, Mama, you said I could play one game--

DEBORAH

Kelley, what did I tell you about
that?

KELLEY

(quickly, chastened)

I'm sorry. You didn't say it, but can
we please, Mama? I'll get in my
pajamas...

SIMON

Can we please, Mama? One game?

DEBORAH

(to Kelley, pointing)

In your pajamas, teeth brushed.

Kelley pops off Simon's lap and heads for the bedroom.

KELLEY

(to Simon)

Get ready to get whipped, home.

Simon laughs. Deborah makes a face, but she's tickled with Kelley. Her mood changes as she notices Otis pulling on his sneakers over at the couch.

DEBORAH

Oh, baby, don't you want to stay home
and be with your uncle?

OTIS

I got to go out. I got to meet some
people.

Otis comes over and takes Simon's hand.

OTIS

Take it slow, Simon.

Simon does not release Otis' hand. Instead he pulls himself up against the boy's weight and playfully twists Otis' arm behind his back. Otis likes the ease with which Simon can handle him.

OTIS

Hey, from the shoulders, old man. You
still got it.

SIMON

I ain't over yet.

OTIS

Be back soon.

Deborah grabs one last mental snapshot and turns away.

EXT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE --NIGHT

58

Simon and Otis come out of the house and linger on the porch steps. A Police HELICOPTER skims the main drag two blocks away. Both Simon and Otis look up and down the quiet block before turning to each other.

SIMON

Anybody coming from the shoulders
anymore? Anybody got the hands?

OTIS

Man, I wish. Seems like every time
you turn around, some coward is
comin' from the pocket and he's
strapped.

A car goes by on the cross street and both of them watch it until it disappears. They are silent with each other for a moment.

SIMON

I never laid any shit on you, did I?
(Otis acknowledges that)

I love you, Otis. And I love my
sister. I don't want her to have any
more pain than she's already had. You
know she's sufferin' here every night
till you come home?

Otis looks up sharply at Simon.

OTIS

Hey, we don't even get into that no
more. When we're together, we're
trying to have it be good.

SIMON

That's why I gotta say something--

OTIS

Well, if we ain't talkin' about it,
why should you be talkin' about it?
It ain't gonna change nothing.

SIMON

Are you sure? Maybe we can figure
something out together.

OTIS

Oh, man! What-- you gonna figure out
something that no one else around
here thought of?

SIMON

Plenty have gotten out, Otis.

OTIS
I don't want out.

SIMON
Bullshit.

OTIS
Without my set, I'm nothin'. They
care about me, man.

SIMON
You want to be gangbangin' when
you're twenty-five?

This strikes Otis as almost funny. He does a double take and looks at Simon like he just arrived on Earth.

OTIS
Shit, I'll never live to be twenty-
five.

Simon stares at Otis, who averts his gaze, looking down the street into the darkness.

OTIS
I gotta roll.

In a moment, he is over the fence and gone.

INT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE --NIGHT

59

LATER. Kelley is asleep in bed. Simon is at the door with Deborah, who gives him a hug. Simon slips her a small wad of bills. Deborah is grateful.

SIMON
I'll call you on Friday.

DEBORAH
Drive carefully.

Simon goes out. Deborah starts the extensive locking process.

EXT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE --NIGHT

60

Simon has the motor running in his '84 Camaro, but for a moment he sits looking at Deborah's house. A Heavyset Woman is walking down the sidewalk with her dog, a Doberman. She looks at the Camaro and crosses to the other side of the street before she gets to it.

Simon puts the car in gear and glides down the block. We TRACK WITH the Camaro to the next corner; it rolls out of frame. It is very QUIET as we TRACK BACK down the block PAST DEBORAH'S HOUSE to the other intersection. We're looking down the intersecting street now. A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS turn onto the street a block away, BLINDING US.

INT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE --NIGHT

61

Deborah wearily dumps the coffee grounds from a pot and turns on the kitchen faucet. THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW IMPLODES AND THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE IS RIDDLED BY A FUSILLADE OF AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE.

Deborah, SCREAMING for Kelley, crawls across the floor toward the bedroom.

Kelley, tears streaming down her face, appears at the bedroom door. Her mouth is working, but she can't be heard any better than her mother in the EXPLOSIVE CACOPHONY. The wall above her head erupts and Kelley is thrown to the floor.

And then there is QUIET. Only the sound of the car outside SQUEALING AWAY, ROUNDING THE CORNER, and then QUIET.

Deborah scrambles through the broken glass and plaster to her little girl and gathers her into her arms. Kelley is shaking violently, but her sobs are silent. Deborah lifts her daughter's nightshirt to check her body. There is no blood. Deborah sits up, pulling Kelley into her lap. And begins to HOWL.

EXT. SWIMMING HOLE, CAMP DOUBLETREE --DAY

62

MORE CRYING. The sound of an eight year old boy in enormous distress. He's crouched on a big boulder fifty yards from the buzz of activity. Thirty Campers are swimming and cavorting in the mountain stream and pools that provide the camp with a swimming hole.

Roberto, in swim trunks, leaves his new girlfriend, AMANDA, at the base of the rock and climbs up next to the kid. He squats down in exactly the same manner as the boy, JACKSON.

ROBERTO

Hey.

(Jackson continues to sob)

Let me see that elbow.

(no go)

Come on, just one look. I want to see
if it's a good as my knee.

He presents his knee, complete with a large scab, to Jackson. Jackson doesn't stop crying, but he lets Roberto gently inspect his scraped elbow.

ROBERTO

No blood, man. Shit, my knee was a
real mess. This thing is just half-
bad.

Jackson pulls it away.

ROBERTO
Did Adam push you?
("yes")
Should we talk to him?
("no")
How come?

JACKSON
He's an asshole.

ROBERTO
Maybe. But we could discuss it.
("no")
Are you having a bad day?
("yes")
Did you get a letter from your mom today?

Jackson looks at Roberto for the first time, nods, and begins to sob. Roberto puts his arm around Jackson, who doesn't fight it..

ROBERTO
Did she say she missed you?
("yes")
Man, my mom used to do that to me. Made me nuts. They love you so much they don't know what's gonna make you feel terrible. I missed my mom so much the first year I came here. And when she wrote and said she missed me, I felt sooo lonely.

Amanda listens at the base of the rock, smiles.

ROBERTO
Is that how you feel?

Jackson nods. His crying begins to slow.

EXT. WOODS, CAMP DOUBLETREE --DAY

63

The Campers are straggling up the hill from the swimming hole. Roberto walks between Jackson and Amanda, each of which is holding his hand. Amanda looks at Roberto for a few steps and then moves in close and kisses him suddenly on the lips.

AMANDA
I love you.

EXT. BALCONY, DEE'S APARTMENT (HOLLYWOOD HILLS) --NIGHT

64

Dee is sprawled in a chaise on the balcony, Discman headphones on her ears. She's dressed in work clothes of skirt and blouse, but the blouse is untucked and she's taken off her pantyhose.

It's a cheap apartment house with an expensive view of the L.A. basin. Not only can you see the twinkling carpet of city lights, but the steady stream of aircraft on the flight path to LAX. Nearer still, the steady crisscross of HELICOPTERS.

There is a half-empty bottle of lemon vodka resting in a bowl of melting ice next to the chaise, as well as a pack of Marlboro Lights and a dirty ashtray. Dee looks about half-gone. She takes a deep toke of cigarette, stubs out the butt and exhales in a long steady stream...

INT. BEDROOM, DEE'S APARTMENT --DAWN

65

The television is playing the news with the sound off, footage of neighborhood fighting in El Salvador. Dee sits heavily on the bed. She slides out of her skirt and then seems to lose the energy to go further. She lays back in bed, looking vaguely in the direction of the TV. She gathers a pillow into her arms and lets her head loll back till she is gazing at the ceiling.

WE PAN OFF THE BED to the window and the night lights of L.A. As we watch, the sky lightens and THE SUN COMES UP.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, CEDARS-SINAI --DAY

66

The rising sun blasts the window of Davis' hospital room. The man himself is sitting up in bed watching the day begin. He's wide awake and has been for a long time. His bad leg is exposed, heavily swathed in a giant cast. He appears to be in a trance of some kind.

A feisty, middle-aged MORNING NURSE comes bustling into the room.

MORNING NURSE

Look who's up and at 'em. Did somebody leave your curtains open last night?

DAVIS

(dreamy)

I asked them to. I wanted to see this.

After a perfunctory glance at the sunrise, the Morning Nurse goes about her business.

MORNING NURSE

City of the angels.

Davis gives her an odd look, but she doesn't notice. He glances down at his cast, runs his hand along it, then looks back out at the morning.

DAVIS

I have seen the light.

The Morning Nurse motions for him to move over on the bed so she can deal with the sheets.

MORNING NURSE
Mazel tov.

EXT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE --DAY

67

In the early morning light, Simon and Otis lift a big piece of plywood into place where the living room window used to be. They begin to nail it into place. A couple of Neighbors have come over to help.

*
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Kelley holds a dust pan for Deborah at the front door as they continue the extended removal of broken glass, plaster and shards of furnishings. Around her body, like a May Day sash, Kelley has wrapped a long section of bright yellow tape on which is repeatedly printed--"POLICE CRIME SCENE--KEEP OUT".

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD --DAY

68

Dee is stopped in morning rush hour traffic. She puts on her make-up, using the rear view mirror. On the curb, leaning against a telephone pole is a Man holding a hand-lettered sign that reads "WILL WORK FOR FOOD".

EXT. BRENTWOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT --DAY

69

Over the roofs of the shops, the Goodyear Blimp floats silently by, morning sun glowing on its silver skin.

Claire is jogging near some stores. She turns down an alley and is startled as a homeless man, THE ALLEY BARON, rises from behind a dumpster. His skin, beard, overcoat, and layers of clothing are covered in street soot that makes him look like a chimney sweep. Scary-looking. Claire takes a sidestep, but doesn't lose her stride. She turns her head to watch the man as she jogs down the alley. The Alley Baron meets her gaze directly and they look at each other until Claire turns away.

CLAIRES POV as she spots the nook in the buildings where The Alley Baron has set up his habitat-- cardboard box mattress, garbage bags, supermarket cart.

INT. KITCHEN, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE --DAY

70 *

Claire and Mack are making dinner. Mack is cutting vegetables for a salad while Claire works at the stove.

MACK

So Harlan told him anyway. What else would Harlan do? The only way he wouldn't have told him is if I had told him to tell him.

CLAIRe

Honey, I just don't think I can talk about Harlan again tonight. I've been begging you to get away from him for the last eight years.

MACK

What, so I can go out and start another Immigration practice on my own?

Mack turns a tomato on its side to slice it.

MACK

When I thought those boys were gonna kill me the other night, I realized I hate fucking Immigration law.

Claire moves a pan from one burner to another with a lot more force than is necessary.

CLAIRe

No you don't! You like it and you're good at it. What you hate is being partners with an asshole like Harlan--

MACK

(irritated)

We don't have to talk about this--

CLAIRe

--Or maybe you hate some other part of your life and you don't want to admit it.

MACK

(looks up sharply)
What? What'd you say?

Claire wipes her forehead with the back of her hand, but does not turn around. She collects herself.

CLAIRe

When a person thinks they're about to die, nothing they did that day is going to look like it was worth their time.

MACK

That's not what you were going to say.

CLAIRe

If you're so sure you know what I'm going to say, then I guess I don't have to say anything.

(quieter)

Look, Mack, I don't even know what I'm going to say from one second to the next.

She turns from the stove to face him.

CLAIRe

The world doesn't make any sense to me anymore. I mean, what's going on? There are babies lying around the streets, people living in boxes, people ready to kill you if you look at them. And we're getting used to it! The world's so nuts, it makes me wonder about all the choices we've--

Claire's eyes widen and she lets out an involuntary SHRIEK.

CLAIRe

Jesus Christ!

Claire points at him.

MACK

Wha...?

Mack looks down. He has sliced his finger open with the knife and blood is gushing out onto the cutting board next to the bright red tomato.

MACK

Shit!

Claire has recovered instantly and now guides Mack to the sink. She begins to run cold water over the wound.

CLAIRe

Let's see what you... Wow!

MACK

Yuck! What an idiot... Man, that smarts!

CLAIRe

Hold it up like that.

Nah, really? I don't think it's that bad.

They unwrap the paper towel, which is soaked with blood now, and stick Mack's finger under the water again.

MACK
(laughs)
See what happens when you yell at me?

CLAIRES
(starts to giggle)
Never again, baby.

MACK
Maybe you'll be a little more understanding now when an older gentleman starts to question his whole life-- Hey! Take it easy there...

Claire has pulled a bandage from the first aid kit and is wrapping it tightly around the finger. She does this quite expertly.

CLAIRES
I'm going to get my purse and take you to St. John's. Maybe you better sit down for a second.

MACK
Claire, I really don't think I need to get it sewn up.

CLAIRES
Mack, are you afraid of a few stitches?

MACK
I'm not afraid of anything, I just think we ought to take a moment and discuss this.

He settles on a kitchen stool, holding the finger high.

CLAIRES
You're kidding, right?

Mack sits silently for several moments, thinking. Then he begins to laugh again, as before. Claire laughs too, though she doesn't know why.

CLAIRe
What? Are you going into shock?

MACK
I hate seeing my blood spill out of me like that. Does everybody--

He stops talking. They both look around. THE WHOLE HOUSE HAS BEGUN TO SHAKE. They look at each other and begin to laugh again.

TOGETHER
Earthquake!

Mack stands up, which is not that easy, and grabs Claire with his good hand.

MACK
Shit! It's a big mother...Let's get outta here.

CLAIRe
Do you think we should? I thought...

The place is still shaking, and HARD.

MACK
Fuck, yes!

He leads her out in a hurry.

EXT. FRONT, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE --DAY

71 *

The earth stops moving as Mack and Claire come out of their house. The street is alive with the SOUND of house and car ALARMS. A few of the Neighbors have also come outside. Greetings are exchanged across the street. Everyone agrees it was a big one.

When Mack and Claire turn back to each other, they begin to laugh again. Claire embraces Mack and takes a look at his bandaged finger.

MACK
Okay, so I'm never complaining again.
(looks heavenward)
Sorry. Sue me.

CLAIRe
Baloney, by tomorrow morning this is all just going to be proof that you better figure out how to live each day to the fullest.

Mack looks around, suddenly.

MACK

Did you feel that? I think there's an aftershock coming...

There is the BANG of a door SLAMMING OPEN and they turn to see their next door neighbor, MRS.MENKEN, a white-haired lady in her late sixties, come stumbling across her lawn toward the hedge which separates the properties.

MRS.MENKEN

(hysterical)

Claire...Claire!

Now the older woman actually slips on the grass and goes down. She is already picking herself up as Mack, Claire, and the Neighbors from across the street converge on her.

CLAIRe

Louise, what's the matter?

MRS.MENKEN

It's Byron! I don't know what's wrong with him...

Mack shoots a look at Claire and runs ahead into the Menkens' house as Claire helps Mrs.Menken hurry after him.

MRS.MENKEN

(crying)

I called 911, but the line is busy!
Claire, I don't know what's happening...

CLAIRe

Come on, Louise. Everything's going to be all right..

The little group goes into the house.

INT. FRONT HALL, MENKEN HOUSE --DAY

72 *

Claire leads Mrs.Menken into the house, but what she sees there is worse than she expected--

Old Mr.Menken is sprawled at an unnatural angle on the living room floor. Mack is hovering over him, giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Mack's finger is now leaking blood copiously through the bandage and the blood is smearing on Mr.Menken's shirt. When Mrs.Menken sees that, she CRIES OUT.

MRS.MENKEN

He's bleeding!

CLAIRe

No he's not, that's Mack.

Claire turns to another Neighbor and hands Mrs. Menken off to her. Claire runs to the phone in the living room and snatches it up. She punches out 9-1-1 and the sound of the THREE BEEPS IS DEAFENING. Claire turns to look at the scene in the hall.

CLAIRe

(into phone)

COME ON!

CLOSE ON Mack's face, pouring sweat now, as he turns his head to take in a huge breath, then lowers his mouth to Mr. Menken's and blows the air into the old man. For just one instant, Mack's eyes flick up and meet--

Claire's. She is talking frantically to someone now, but we can BARELY HEAR HER, over the SOUND OF A SIREN. Claire's face begins to PULSE WITH RED LIGHT as we DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

EXT. STREET, IN FRONT OF MENKEN HOUSE --NIGHT

73

An ambulance pulls away, SIREN and LIGHTS GOING.

Mack and Claire, looking spent, watch it go. Claire and Mack exchange a look and then Claire turns away IN SLOW MOTION as we PUSH IN ON MACK'S FACE. He turns back to watch the ambulance go and we are VERY CLOSE as he closes his eyes. We DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE --NIGHT

74

The SIREN FADES and we are CLOSE ON Mack's face again, but he is asleep on his pillow, the dark shape of Claire next to him. IN SLOW MOTION Mack turns his head on the pillow and we HEAR the approaching THWACK-THWACK of a HELICOPTER. It gets louder and louder.

EXT. NIGHT SKY ABOVE SANTA MONICA (MACK'S DREAM) --NIGHT

75

A HELICOPTER come flying DIRECTLY AT CAMERA, ENGINE ROARING. It passes close by and disappears. WE PAN as it goes by and see that we are floating 1000 feet above the oceanfront in Santa Monica. As the SOUND OF THE HELICOPTER recedes, it becomes VERY QUIET here, very peaceful. And now an extraordinary thing happens--

MACK FLOATS INTO VIEW. His eyes are wide, his arms spread, he has achieved every human's dream-- he's flying. In fact, this is MACK'S DREAM.

Mack is smiling like a maniac, experimenting now with his abilities! Those abilities seem prodigious-- he is able to dart about the city at incredible speeds. And once there, he can swoop and hover and rise with an ease no helicopter can equal.

He's on the move now, straightening his arms before him, diving down toward the Santa Monica Freeway as it heads east from the ocean. In seconds, he has reached the interchange with the San Diego Freeway and banked his body to the left, following the lighted curve of road below. He spots something to his right and veers off.

EXT. ABOVE CENTURY CITY (MACK'S DREAM) --NIGHT

76

The twin towers of Century City form a slalom course with the Die Hard Plaza, an irresistible test of his maneuverability. He zooms through them with delighted ease.

We're CLOSE ON Mack's face, giddy as he clears the skyscrapers. But now, something goes wrong. Despite his efforts, he begins a steady, sloped descent, beyond his control. His speed picks up, he's going in! At the last moment, HE PULLS OUT, REGAINING CONTROL. Mack is shaken. This dream is unreliable. He looks at the neighborhood not far below--

EXT. ABOVE WATTS (MACK'S DREAM) --NIGHT

77

The Watts Towers are approaching on his left. He glides silently over the roof tops. An AMBULANCE speeds by below him, lights flashing, SIREN screaming. In the backyard of a house, a barbecue is going on.

Mack hears GUNFIRE and looks in that direction. Some sort of firefight is going on in a darkened block. He can see the FLASH of automatic weapons. He swoops down low, curious and frightened.

He hears another BURST OF GUNFIRE and turns his head to look. When he does, a giant BEAM OF LIGHT, as though from a Police Spotlight, illuminates the scene. As he moves his head, the light follows his movements, as though he were the source. Now the BEAM falls on a group of Gang Combatants. They immediately turn their attention skyward and OPEN FIRE on Mack. We can HEAR BULLETS WHIZZING BY.

Mack puts his arms out, prays and soars toward the stars.

EXT. ABOVE HOLLYWOOD (MACK'S DREAM) --NIGHT

78

Mack glides down from the stars, over the lights of Hollywood toward the darkness of the hills and the Hollywood Sign. Yet, even at this distance, we can see that the huge illuminated letters read "HULLO MACK".

Mack is tickled. He squints. There is the tiny figure of a man perched on the top of the giant "C". Mack closes on him fast. The man is waving. Mack will only have a second to recognize him as he flashes by the sign--

It is Simon, his savior, looking grave behind his waving hand.
BAM! Mack is by him, headed into the hills.

INT/EXT. DEE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

ZEROING IN now on a particular apartment house, a particular balcony, a particular window. Mack's flight is easy now, under control. He floats up to the window and looks in.

MACK'S POV. This is Dee's bedroom. The light from another room is all that illuminates the curve of her figure under the white sheet. She is turned away, but now she rolls languidly toward the window. Her eyes are open and her look to Mack is all invitation. She lifts the sheet to reveal her naked form in the shadows.

Mack is in real pain. He lifts his hand to touch the window. As his fingertips make contact, THE IMAGE OF DEE SHATTERS AND FALLS AWAY, replaced by another bedroom--

INT./EXT. MASTER BEDROOM, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE (MACK'S DREAM)--NIGHT

80

Mack is looking in the open window of his own bedroom. Both he and Claire are asleep in there. The CAMERA FLOATS FORWARD TOWARD THE SLEEPING FIGURES, past Mack, until it hovers over Claire. Slowly, the CAMERA DESCENDS toward Claire's face. IN SLOW MOTION her head turns on the pillow and she opens her eyes.

She sits up with a start and turns to find Mack. He's not there, and there's no sign that he ever has been. Claire leaps out of bed and hurries from the room.

INT. HALLWAY, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE (CLAIRES DREAM)--NIGHT

81

Claire hurries across the hall to Roberto's room and throws open the door. The room is bare, completely empty. In a panic now, Claire runs down the steps and throws open the front door.

INT/EXT. MACK'S HOUSE (FRONT DOOR) --DAY

82

BRIGHT SUNLIGHT POURS IN and we realize that we are now in CLAIRE'S DREAM.

EXT. AIR TERMINAL, LAX (CLAIRES DREAM) --DAY

83

An AMBULANCE with lights and SIREN going WIPES OFF SCREEN, revealing the entrance to the Delta terminal. Claire runs into frame, her nightgown flowing in the wind, and goes into the building.

INT. DELTA CONCOURSE, LAX (CLAIRE'S DREAM) --DAY

84

Claire runs headlong down the concourse. Other Travelers look curiously at her and get out of her way.

Three Airline Employees watch as Claire rushes up to a gate. They seem to be expecting her. They open the door to the tunnel and wave her through. Claire pounds down the tunnel, turns at the last jog, and steps outside, into--

EXT. PLATFORM, MAIN TRACKS, UNION STATION (CLAIRE'S DREAM) --DAY

85

A silver Amtrak Passenger Train is slowly pulling away from the platform. Claire runs after it. She comes to a window and looks inside--

Mack and Roberto sit facing each other by the window. They are so caught up in their conversation that Claire has to rap twice on the window to get their attention. Roberto smiles when he sees her, and waves happily goodbye. Claire turns with anguish to Mack. He shrugs and puts his hand to the window in a gesture of farewell. HIS FINGER IS WRAPPED IN A BANDAGE AND SOAKED WITH BLOOD. His wagging motion leaves a bloody rainbow on the window.

The train suddenly accelerates, impossibly fast, and disappears in a blur. Claire is sobbing now as she looks after the train.

A Red Cap Porter comes by pushing a hand dolly loaded with luggage. He touches Claire once on the shoulder, comfortingly, but he does not stop. Claire slowly raises her head, registering something and spins around to look at the Porter. He is smiling back at her as he goes down a tunnel. In that one second, Claire sees that the top bundle on the hand dolly is THE BABY, swaddled in the blanket in which Claire found her. Claire rushes down the tunnel after him.

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EXT. WOODS (CLAIRE'S DREAM) --DAY

86

Claire finds herself in a green area, full of trees and heavy shrubbery. The Porter and his dolly are nowhere to be seen. But Claire hears something, and now we hear it, too: the CRYING OF THE BABY.

Claire gets down and starts fighting her way through the bushes. The branches whip at her face and scratch her arms. We hear only HER LABORED BREATH, THE RUSTLE OF THE BUSHES, AND THE BABY'S CRY.

Claire fights her way through one more bush and sees the glimmer of the blanket. When she parts the branches, there is no Baby. Just the roughly discarded blanket. Anguished, Claire reaches to pick it up. Her hand is almost to it when a big, rotting, black shoe STOMPS DOWN on the blanket. Claire looks up in terror. Looming over her is The Alley Baron.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE --NIGHT

Claire wakes from her dream with a start. There are tears on her cheeks, which surprises her. She turns to find Mack sleeping beside her. She looks around the room. Then she shakes her husband awake.

CLAIRe
Mack. Wake up, Mack!

INT./EXT. PATIENT DISCHARGE EXIT, CEDARS-SINAI --DAY

Davis is getting out of the hospital. The Morning Nurse pushes his wheelchair, which is flanked by Vanessa and Mack. Bringing up the rear are three extremely hip ASSISTANTS. The two young men have moussed hair and Armani clothes, the female of the group is a knock-out in cutting-edge shades. She carries some of the gifts Davis has accumulated. The two guys are wrangling his fancy luggage and loads of scripts.

DAVIS
(to Mack)
Wait a minute. What are you telling me? You have the baby at home now?

VANESSA
Oh, Mack, that's wonderful.

MACK
No, no, that's not what I said. I said Claire wants to adopt the baby...

VANESSA
Claire is so great!

DAVIS
So you don't have the baby at home?
(Mack shakes his head)
So what's the problem? You're not allowed to just keep every baby you find, are you? Aren't there laws and shit about that kind of thing?

MACK
Yeah, there are laws. But there's a process you can go through and Claire has already started collecting the forms.

VANESSA
She is the most self-actualized person I ever met.

MACK
She is this week.

They come outside to the pick-up area. A huge limousine is waiting, Driver poised at the back door. A second sedan, manned by a Teamster, waits behind. The Assistants go into a feeding frenzy around Davis, but it is the Morning Nurse and Mack who actually manage to ease Davis into the limo, where a box has been placed between the two seats for Davis to rest his cast-encased leg on. Davis still has considerable pain.

When he is settled in, Davis motions for the Morning Nurse to lean in.

DAVIS

Mabel, I'm never gonna forget the times we've had.

MORNING NURSE

As you perfectly well know, my name is Esther.

DAVIS

My mother's name was Esther and you have been much kinder to me than my mother ever was. So I have given you a better name.

Davis sticks his hand out of the car and snaps his fingers. One of the Assistants immediately places a wad of large bills in his grasp. Davis takes the Morning Nurse's hand in his and presses the money on her.

DAVIS

When I think of the experience that changed the course of my life, I will think appreciatively of you.

The Morning Nurse takes the money and sticks it in Davis' breast pocket.

MORNING NURSE

You're very kind. Remember, if you start to feel pressure in there...
(indicates the cast)
...it's time to have the puss drained.

DAVIS

I love it when you talk that way.
(takes out the money)
Don't you have a favorite charity
you'd like to give this to? A favorite child? A favorite horse?

DAVIS (CONT'D)
(Nurse declines again)
This is very unusual for me. Anyone
will tell you I'm notoriously cheap.

His Assistants all confirm it by expression and gesture.

MORNING NURSE
Goodbye, Davis.

Davis grabs her arm and pulls her in to kiss her on the cheek.
She is surprised, pleased and a little flustered. She doesn't
notice that Davis has slipped the money into the pocket of her
uniform.

DAVIS
So long, babe.

The Morning Nurse retreats with the wheelchair. The limo Driver
closes the door behind Mack and Vanessa as the three Assistants
hustle off to the waiting sedan.

INT./EXT. LIMOUSINE --DAY

89

The car wheels out of the parking lot.

MACK
So tell me about your life change.

DAVIS
It's not a life change. I had some
kind of vision, some insight. But I
don't want to talk about it.

VANESSA
Come on, Davis, tell him. He's your
best friend.

DAVIS
We're talking about him and his new
baby. Besides, I think if you talk
about stuff, maybe that takes the
place of doing it.

MACK
I wouldn't say that's been one of
your big problems.

VANESSA
No kidding!

Davis gives her a look that starts reproachful, but turns into a
suggestive grin. He turns his attention back to Mack.

DAVIS

So Claire wants this baby, but you're not too high on the idea. It's not that you don't like kids. In fact, Roberto is maybe the best thing that ever happened in your life. But Roberto is fifteen now and he's about done with you. Pretty soon he'll be leaving the house and you thought maybe you and Claire would have the kind of freedom again that you had back when you were first married.

Mack laughs.

DAVIS

The fact is that you feel you're getting old way too fast and the last thing you had in mind was to start another family and deal with the diapers and the whining and all the attendant baby baggage. What do you want to start with all that shit again when you wake up every morning wondering if you did the right thing the first time?

VANESSA

Davis, you're awful!

MACK

(to Vanessa)

This is so much more time-efficient than a regular conversation.

DAVIS

Look, with the world going the way it is, you gotta wonder what's the point of anything. I mean honestly, have things ever been worse?

(whispers aside to Vanessa)
In fact, they have.

(back to Mack)

So, since you're currently obsessed with the question of what's goin' down and why are you goin' with it, what kind of shape are you in to take on some new baby that came from god-knows-where and has who-knows-what kind of health and emotional problems and never asked to be taken in anyway?

There is a long silence in the limo.

MACK

On the other hand...

Mack and Davis start to laugh together. Then Mack notices that Vanessa is crying. Davis sees it a second later.

DAVIS

Babe?

Vanessa waves him off. Mack pulls out a handkerchief for her.

DAVIS

What is it?

Again, Vanessa shakes her head. Davis watches her wipe her nose with the handkerchief, then he speaks to Mack, softly.

DAVIS

Since we've got a moment here, maybe you could explain something to me that I have never understood. What's the theory on this handkerchief thing? After you blow your nose in it, you just put it back in your pocket? And then when you see someone in distress, you like hand 'em this gift from your pocket? And they're supposed to be grateful and wipe it all over their face?

Mack gives him a look, then turns back to Vanessa, putting a hand on her knee.

VANESSA

(to Davis, sniffing)

If I tell you, you're going to think it's about you, but it's not about you at all. But you won't believe it and you'll get all defensive.

DAVIS

Oh really? Well, if you don't want to say it, don't force yourself--

VANESSA

(starting to cry again)

It's just that I want to have children. I really want to have them. And I don't care how rotten the world is, I want to have them anyway. But I'm so far from being able to have them. I'm all involved with you and you're not going to have kids with me. We're not even going to get married. So I'm so far from having a situation where I can even start to try to have them.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

I've got to break up with you and find someone else who I can stand to be with and, even then, I don't know how easy it's going to be. I might have trouble getting pregnant or something after everything I've done to my body...

She grinds to a halt. Both men look at her, then at each other.

MACK

Maybe I should hop out up here. I can call a cab.

VANESSA

(puts out her hand to him)

Why? You're my friend too, aren't you, Mack?

Mack takes her hand and confirms that. Davis reaches out and takes * Vanessa's hand out of Mack's.

DAVIS

Who says we're never gonna get married and have kids?

Both Mack and Vanessa turn to look at him, in wonder.

EXT. DEBORAH'S NEIGHBORHOOD --DAY

90

Deborah is walking Kelley to school. They come upon a Woman down on her knees on the sidewalk. As they step around her, they can see that she is scrubbing furiously at the pavement with a bucket, a big brush and a bottle of bleach. She's trying to remove a wide, irregular blood stain.

EXT. GAS STATION --DAY

91

Dawn. The sky is rosy, the palm trees black. Simon wheels his big tow truck into the station, a Cadillac hooked to the back. He maneuvers the whole mess around so the Cadillac is lined up with a work bay, then gets out to lower the car to the ground.

Mack gets out of his car, parked to the side, and walks over to Simon. Mack is wearing a tie, but no jacket.

MACK

Hey.

Simon looks around, doesn't recognize Mack, continues with his * work.

SIMON

Hey, how ya doin'?

MACK

I don't know if you remember me...

Simon stops his work for a moment, looks at Mack more closely.

SIMON

Oh hey, man, sure... Mack, right?

(Mack smiles)

I didn't recognize you at first.

He pulls a rag from his pocket, wipes and offers his hand to Mack. They shake.

SIMON

How's the car?

MACK

Oh, good, good.

Mack is uncomfortable.

MACK

I called and they said you'd be getting in about now...

Simon nods, waiting, curious.

MACK

I wanted to thank you again for the other night.

SIMON

(waves it off)

You did already..

MACK

I think maybe you saved my life.

SIMON

Oh, I don't know about that..

MACK

Yeah, well...Listen, could I ^{buy} you breakfast somewhere or something?

Simon looks at him a few beats, then nods. Mack is relieved, the most awkward part is past.

INT. COFFEE SHOP --DAY

92

Simon is eating a big breakfast, Mack a light one.

MACK

I played in high school. I was sixth man for a year and a half.

SIMON

Me too. Sixth man. Until my last semester, then I started.

MACK

No kidding? Center or forward?

SIMON

Forward. I wasn't big enough for center.

MACK

That must have been some team. If we'd had a guy your size at my school, he'd have played center and forward at the same time.

SIMON

(laughs)

We had Oscar Benson on that team.

MACK

(impressed)

No shit. You must be pretty good.

SIMON

(denies it)

I wasn't playin' the same game Oscar was.

They are silent for a moment. Mack takes a breath and seems about to say something. But can't get started. He takes a bite of toast, glances up at Simon, embarrassed.

SIMON

Look, the other night, I don't know if you were in so much danger, 'cept maybe of losin' your wallet. I didn't save your life, I just showed up to do my job. That's what I'm supposed to do. So you shouldn't be thinking you've got to say something to me or anything. It's done. You don't owe me nothing.

Mack looks at him for several beats.

MACK

One morning about three years ago, I was going to a meeting at the Mutual Benefit Building on Wilshire, in the Miracle Mile. I love that name, the Miracle Mile. The building across the street...

EXT. MUTUAL BENEFIT BUILDING (FLASHBACK) --DAY

93

We're looking up at the top of the fifty story tower from street level. The camera TILTS DOWN AND OFF the building until we're in the same POV we saw in the earlier FLASHBACK, looking directly across the sunny, busy street to the opposite corner, cars slowing for a red light.

MACK (VO)

...from the County Art Museum.
I was thinking about the meeting I was going to, I was worried about it, actually, and I started to step off the curb...

Mack steps into frame, about to move into the crosswalk. An arm reaches out and grabs him by the back of his jacket.

MACK (VO)

...This stranger grabbed me and yanked me back. And a city bus came flying by my nose...

Suddenly, the bus ROARS BY, FILLING THE FRAME inches ahead of Mack.

MACK (VO)

...I mean, it just filled up the world six inches from my nose. I would've been like a wet bug stain on the front of the bus. Wouldn't have even felt it, it would've been over so fast...

Now in SLOW MOTION, Mack turns to face the stranger, a WOMAN IN A BASEBALL CAP, who is standing among a half-dozen other Pedestrians on the corner. Practically every one is smiling or laughing in relief at the catastrophe avoided.

MACK (VO)

...I thanked this stranger, this woman in a baseball cap, but I was pretty much in a daze...

The group on the corner moves on into the street, heading onto their days. The Woman in the Baseball Cap goes with them, moving past Mack, turning to respond to his unheard "thank you".

MACK

When I thanked her, she said,
"My pleasure." I didn't notice till
the last moment that the cap she was
wearing was from the Pittsburgh
Pirates, my favorite team since I was
a kid...

She moves off with the crowd, looking back at Mack, who continues to stand on the corner.

INT. COFFEE SHOP (BACK TO PRESENT)

94

Simon watches Mack with interest.

SIMON

Roberto Clemente, right?

MACK

(impressed)

Right...I never got over the idea
that I should have thanked that woman
more, talked to her a little while,
something. She'd reached out and
yanked me back from the
edge..literally Changed everything
for me, and for my wife and my son.
And then she just wandered away. Down
the Miracle Mile.

Mack looks away for a moment, then turns back to Simon, smiling.

MACK

And how come she was wearing a
Pirates cap? I mean, that's not your
usual thing at 9 AM on Wilshire
Boulevard, a woman in a Pittsburgh
Pirates baseball cap. It's a little
suspicious.

SIMON

You lost me.

MACK

I just wondered later, was she for
real? Was that a real person or was
that something else, you know, sent
from somewhere else, to grab me back
from that curb.

Simon gives him a look, then smiles.

SIMON

Is that what you're wondering about
me?

MACK

I just couldn't let it happen again. I didn't want to just let you drift away like she did and never talk to you. It didn't seem right to let it happen twice.

Simon thinks about that a while, then goes back to his eggs.

MACK

So, that's why I'm bothering you.

SIMON

You ain't bothering me. You're buying me breakfast.

MACK

Good.

SIMON

You got a right to try and figure out what confuses you. But seems like you're making more of it than there is. This world is a hard place, but sometimes you just get lucky.

MACK

I believe in luck.

SIMON

And, of course, sometimes you don't. The one thing's for sure is that if you're alive, some terrible shit's gonna happen to you. And maybe some good things, too. But you can count on the terrible. And if it doesn't kill you, then you're gonna be around to see it come down some other way.

A Waitress comes by with a pot of coffee and refills their cups.

SIMON

Thank you, honey.

(to Mack)

My father died last year. Eighty-one years old. That's a long time for a black man to live in this town. Outlived everybody he ever knew. He saw two wives die and three of his children. He had a great ugly old face, looked like a suitcase gone a million miles, all beat-up and scuffed and dented and stained. Man, he looked like he walked eighty years on his face!

They both laugh.

SIMON

When I used to look at that face and see all the pain there, all the things he'd lost, all the hurt he'd had... I wondered why he wanted to go on. Why he didn't just give it up and lay on down.

MACK

Did you figure it out?

SIMON

(shakes his head)

Nah, I never figured out much about that guy... I asked him, though.

MACK

What'd he say?

Simon wipes his mouth and crumples his napkin.

SIMON

"Habit."

EXT. COFFEE SHOP PARKING LOT --DAY

95

Mack and Simon walk across the parking lot toward their cars, which are parked side by side.

MACK

Does she have a job?

SIMON

She's a cashier at Ralph's. It lets her work her hours around the little girl's school.

Mack chews that over a few moments.

MACK

Would they let her transfer to another store, do you think?

SIMON

I don't know. Why?

MACK

I was just wondering about something.

SIMON

What's that?

MACK

I don't know. It just seems like an impossible situation. You can't live like that, thinking someone might shoot up your house at any moment.

SIMON

A lot of people do.

MACK

I know. It's unbelievable, that's all.

They have come to Simon's car.

MACK

Look, a guy I know has an apartment house in Canoga Park. I might be able to get her something out there. At a very reasonable price. Do you think she'd consider that?

Simon thinks about this. For the first time he looks uncomfortable.

SIMON

Listen, Mack, thanks, but I'm not so sure it's a good idea.

Mack looks at him closely. They're silent together for a few moments.

MACK

I'm not gonna push it if you're not comfortable, but you should know that this wouldn't be a big deal for me. This guy is dying to do me a favor, anyway. I mean...don't be afraid to say yes.

(seems done, then--)

Maybe you want to think about it. We don't have to decide now.

SIMON

Maybe.

MACK

Okay then. You have my number.

Simon nods. They shake hands and turn to their cars. When they have each reached their driver's door, Mack stops and speaks to Simon over his car.

MACK

Simon.

SIMON

Yeah?

MACK

What is it exactly? I want to know for two reasons. I want to know if it's what I think it is. And I want to make sure I haven't done something to offend you, because that's the last thing I wanted to do.

SIMON

(laughs)

You are a piece of work, man.

MACK

I know. It's just I know sometimes I let stuff go and then I wonder about it later.

SIMON

Okay, here it is. I've tried to help people a few times myself, and it seems like it almost never works.

Mack has his own memories along these lines.

SIMON

I guess I think it's hard, maybe dangerous even, reaching in and muckin' around with peoples' lives. Sometimes, there's a reason they're doin' what they're doin'.

MACK

(agrees)

That's a tough one. You don't want to fuck with things you shouldn't, but you don't always want to turn away either. I haven't figured it out.

Mack starts to get in his car.

SIMON

Is that what you thought it was?

MACK

Yeah. Sort of...that and, you know, the white guy...

SIMON

(laughs again)

You white?

(Mack smiles)

Hey, how 'bout Canoga Park? That's pretty white, ain't it?

MACK
Nah, not really. Think about it. I'll see you.

Mack gets into his car and starts the engine. Simon watches him for a moment, thoughtful, then gets going.

INT. LIVING ROOM, DAVIS' HOUSE (HILLS ABOVE SUNSET) --DAY

96*

Everything about Davis' house is spectacular-- the view, the furnishings, the art, the effect. Davis has very good taste. The crass thing about the house is that everything in it is in very good taste.

Davis has been lavishly set up as an invalid in the living room. Sunlight floods the room through the enormous windows. Davis' Assistants and House Servants move quietly about the surrounding rooms, visible through doorways and doorways beyond doorways. Occasionally, one will enter silently and place a phone message next to Davis or deliver a beautifully arranged plate of food to Davis and his visitor, Claire.

DAVIS

(speaking very softly)

...to try and understand just what exactly had been delivered unto me at the cost of flesh and bone and precious blood. What message was being delivered in a .38 caliber envelope for me to open and read and understand. And this problem, this difficulty I was having with understanding, it grew on me like a fever. It buzzed around my brain till I could no longer sleep, or eat, or think about anything else. It was as painful and disturbing as the physical wound I could see in my thigh.

Claire fights the glimmer of a smile.

DAVIS

What?

CLAIRe

(serious)

Nothing. Go on. I want to hear this.

DAVIS

You know, Claire, I had a feeling that you, more than anyone else, would have a problem taking me seriously.

CLAIRe

Please, Davis, go on. I am taking you seriously. I'm sorry for whatever you think you saw.

DAVIS

I will go on, but first you have to tell me what made you smile.

CLAIRe

Why, are you editing this speech for future use?

DAVIS

Claire.

CLAIRe

Unto.

DAVIS

Come again?

CLAIRe

(giggling)

You said "delivered unto" you. I'm sorry.

DAVIS

That is purposeful, my sweet. We're talking about a religious experience here for a man who has rejected religion since first ejaculation.

CLAIRe

Please go on, Davis. The suspense is killing me.

Davis gives her a look. There is real affection between them.

DAVIS

At the end of a long, tortuous night, head pounding in syncopation to my throbbing wound, there came a glorious, delicate dawn. First light as subtle and grand and sensual as a Monet...

He fights a smile; they're sharing the joke now. Claire twirls her finger in the broadcasting sign for "Speed it up".

DAVIS

And I knew. I knew.

Claire watches, waits, turns her head like a puppy.

DAVIS

I knew that I can't make those movies anymore. I can't make another piece of art that glorifies violence and bloodshed and brutality. I can't contribute another stone to the landslide of dehumanizing rage which has swept down upon this country like a pestilence...

(stops, considers)

That's a mixed metaphor, isn't it? Anyway, I'm done, kaput, fini. No more exploding bodies, exploding buildings, exploding anything. No more shit.

CLAIRES

Davis, that's wonderful! You know how I feel about it. I think I've always been frank with you.

DAVIS

To say the least! But you'll never have to say another word.

CLAIRES

Excellent! I applaud you. Have you told the studio?

DAVIS

Fuck the studio.

CLAIRES

Have you told your business manager?

DAVIS

Fuck 'em. Claire, you've said it all along, there's a fortune to be made in stories about life...

(she doesn't remember saying this)

...the life force, the creation of life, the very instinct for living. Besides, I don't give a shit about money. I've made more money this year than my father made in his whole life. At the rate I'm going, I won't run out of money for...

(calculates, frowns)

...well, for eighteen months, at least.

Claire laughs as she gets up, goes over and kisses Davis on the forehead.

DAVIS

I'm going to make the world a better place for your new bambina.

Claire gives him a sharp look and takes a wedge of cantaloupe from his plate.

DAVIS

What's happening?

CLAIRe

What's happening... Let's see. We're filling out forms, we're being evaluated, we're becoming official foster parents, which would be the first step.

She chews on the melon.

CLAIRe

We're arguing, we're talking, we're flirting with marital disaster. Mack and I are both being passionately, unshakably devoted to our own position.

Davis looks at her a while.

DAVIS

Claire, may I be very, very frank with you?

Claire just laughs at that question.

DAVIS

Is it possible this has come up because Roberto is about to move on and you are, coincidentally, approaching a certain age?

CLAIRe

As opposed to what?

(Davis is confused)

You mean, say, as opposed to being wildly in love with this particular baby, which I had in my house for nine hours?

Davis shrugs, "that will do".

CLAIRe

Of course that's why this has come up, Davis. It's not that simple, but, yes.

DAVIS

But is that rational?

CLAIRES
Rational?

DAVIS
Reasonable, feasible...for you and Mack?

CLAIRES
(thinks a moment)
Well, I guess I'd have to say...I don't really care.

EXT. RALPH'S MARKET (INGLEWOOD) --DAY

97

Simon and Deborah are walking the edge of the parking lot. Deborah is on a break and she wears her Ralph's uniform. She lights up a cigarette and listens to Simon. They are discussing Mack's proposition.

INT. CAFETERIA, MACK'S OFFICE BUILDING --DAY

98

Dee and Jane are eating lunch. Across the room, Mack pays for some food and turns to head out. Dee and Mack are very aware of each other. Mack comes by the girls' table on his way out.

DEE
Hi.

MACK
Hi.
(to Jane)
Hi.

DEE
Do you know Jane? This is Mack.

JANE
Hi, Mack.

MACK
Hi, Jane.

DEE
Do you want to sit down?

MACK
Thanks. I have something I should do upstairs.

Dee accepts that, but Mack does not leave. He takes a bite of the apple in his hand and stands there chewing it. Jane looks up at him and laughs.

MACK
I'm having one of those days...

JANE
Which kind?

MACK
Oh, I keep drifting. I can't seem to carry through on anything. Like I'll say I have to go upstairs, but I don't really want to, so I don't leave.

Jane laughs. She's got a nice laugh and a pretty smile.

DEE
Have a seat.

MACK
Okay, thanks.

He sits down next to Dee, across from Jane.

MACK
At the same time, I'm feeling very free, you know. Like I've got a little buzz on or something. Does that happen to you?

Dee considers, nods.

JANE
It doesn't happen to me as much as I'd like.

MACK
It's very pleasant.

JANE
What brought it on? Maybe I'll try it.

Mack thinks about that a bit, squints.

MACK
I'm not sure. I got up really early this morning. Sometimes it helps to be a little sleepy.

JANE
I got that part down.

MACK

I went to see this guy that helped me the other night when my car broke down. He drives a tow truck and I really like him. His daughter is at a deaf college in Washington, D.C. His wife left him and I think he's kind of lonely. But he seems peaceful about it.

JANE

That would be nice.

DEE

Yeah, it'd be great if you could sort of be down about things, but still be all right with it, like finally accept the fact that you're gonna feel bad most of the time and not fight it.

MACK

(watching her)

Of course, it would also be nice not to feel bad most of the time.

DEE

But that's how you get in trouble. By thinking how nice it'd be to be happy more.

Mack and Jane look at her. Mack turns to Jane.

MACK

Jane, are you married?

("no")

Boyfriend?

Now both Jane and Dee are a little surprised by the line of questioning. Jane debates whether to answer, but finally shakes her head "no".

MACK

Would you like to meet this guy?

JANE

I don't know. What's he look like?

MACK

How important is that?

JANE

Mmm...somewhat important.

MACK

I was just curious. This guy is a very handsome black man.

Jane's eyebrows go up, interested. She and Dee exchange a look and begin to laugh.

MACK

I don't know if he'll even be interested. I don't know that much about him.

DEE

How are you gonna describe Jane?

Mack looks Jane over.

MACK

The same way.

JANE

A very handsome black man?

INT/EXT. FRONT PORCH, DEBORAH'S HOUSE --DAY

99

A tall, heavyset black man in a sport coat and tie waits on the porch. He's very vigorous and he can't stand still. He plays with the zipper of his large, cheap briefcase and keeps looking cheerfully around at the neighborhood. The front door is open behind the heavy screen door and now Kelley returns with Deborah in tow. Deborah wipes the back of her neck with a dish towel.

DEBORAH

Yes?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

Hello, Mrs. Dotson. You've got a very polite little lady there.

DEBORAH

What is it?

The INSURANCE SALESMAN is unzipping his brief case.

INSURANCE SALESMAN

My name is Harvey Charles and I represent the Ohio Continental Insurance Company. Here is my card.

Deborah looks at it through the screen.

DEBORAH

You selling insurance?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

Yes, ma'am, Ohio Continental is offering extremely low cost life insurance to the people in your neighborhood.

DEBORAH

We don't want any life insurance.

INSURANCE SALESMAN

That's the first thing most people say, but if you'll just give me one minute of your time, I think you'll understand why several of your friends and neighbors have already signed up.

He takes a thick wad of papers from his briefcase.

INSURANCE SALESMAN

You see, the policies we're selling cost only about \$10 per month and yet, pay immediate cash benefits of up to \$10,000 on the death of the holder.

DEBORAH

I'm too young and too strapped to be gettin' life insurance.

INSURANCE SALESMAN

We're not just talking about you here, Mrs. Dotson. Think about your children. I understand you have a teenage boy in addition to this cute little lady.

DEBORAH

Who told you that?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

(gestures behind)

Mrs. Riley across the street. I ask you only one thing, Mrs. Dotson, and that is this, just glance at the news clippings which I hold here in my hand.

He expertly fans the papers in his hand like playing cards. Newspaper stories have been Xeroxed on the sheets. Deborah squints through the screen as he holds them up.

DEBORAH

What about them?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

All of these stories have appeared in the last six months in the Los Angeles Times. And what they show, in frightening detail, is the high rate of violent death caused by the gangs and crime in yours and surrounding neighborhoods. Can I hand these to you to take a look at?

Deborah makes no move to open the door. The Insurance Saleman speaks confidentially.

INSURANCE SALESMAN

Look, Mrs. Dotson, I'm not going to kid you. These policies are inexpensive because the benefits aren't that big when they pay off. Nobody's going to retire on five or ten thousand dollars. But what they will do, and this is why people just like you are buying them, what they'll do is, if harm should come to one of your children, this policy would cover all funeral expenses and arrangements. Which in L.A. today will run you close to \$4000. And I'm not talking about anything elaborate.

Deborah's face has been going through a slow change.

DEBORAH

Kelley, go wait in the kitchen.

KELLEY

What?

DEBORAH

(gives her a little push)

Go!

She watches Kelley retreat, then turns back to the man and speaks in a harsh whisper.

DEBORAH

Are you trying to sell me life insurance policies on my children?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

(calm, appeasing)

Ma'am, they are the ones on the front line. They are the ones in danger. Where is your son right this moment? No one likes it, but if you try to "deny it..."

DEBORAH
Get the fuck off of my porch.

INSURANCE SALESMAN
...and deny the heavy financial
burden which ensues...

DEBORAH
(screams)
Get away from my house!

The Insurance Salesman steps back. He looks at her, nods, turns away.

INSURANCE SALESMAN.
Yes, ma'am.

EXT. BRENTWOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT --DAY

100

Morning. Claire is jogging again. She comes to the mouth of the alley where she saw The Alley Baron and passes it by. But then she seems to reconsider and hesitates, jogging in place, then circles back and heads down the alley.

The alley is empty as Claire starts toward the other end. Then, in the distance, a figure rounds a corner and heads slowly in Claire's direction. It is The Alley Baron, scuffling her way, his head down.

As Claire closes the distance between them, she can see that the man is talking to himself. It's hard to make out what he's saying.

THE ALLEY BARON
...never again...don't need to do
it...the bottom of the list...who
needs it...Beaufort South Carolina...

Claire is passing him now, but he does not look up at her. She is relieved, and has gone two strides beyond him when--

THE ALLEY BARON
...keep the baby...

Claire doesn't believe what she's heard. She pulls up, breathing hard. She turns around to look, but The Alley Baron has continued on his way, the same as before. Claire considers, then runs after the man. When she draws just ahead of him, she slows to a backward walk, at his pace, keeping a little distance between them.

CLAIREE
What did you say?
(he keeps walking)
Excuse me, I thought I heard you say
something to me.

CLAIRe (CONT'D)
(he walks)
Did you say something to me or not?

The Alley Baron stops suddenly and lifts his head. He seems to have grown a foot in one second and his gaze is harrowing. His voice is deep and wide as a volcano.

THE ALLEY BARON
What do you want?

CLAIRe
I thought I heard you say something to me.

THE ALLEY BARON
So what?

CLAIRe
So I want to know what you said.

THE ALLEY BARON
Fuck off.

He trudges on. Claire watches him a moment, then goes after him.

CLAIRe
Just tell me what you said, then I'll leave you alone.

The Alley Baron turns on her so abruptly that Claire jumps back. When he sees that he has frightened her, he can't suppress a little smile of pleasure. It's not attractive.

THE ALLEY BARON
What's your problem, lady, are you lonely?

CLAIRe
(surprising steel)
If you want to say something to me, just say it.

THE ALLEY BARON
I did.

CLAIRe
But I didn't hear it.

He leans in toward her.

THE ALLEY BARON
You're irritating me. Doesn't it occur to you that I could do anything I want with you in this alley? Aren't you smart enough to be afraid?

CLAIRe
What's that mean?

THE ALLEY BARON
I saw you puffing along and I was encouraging you. Keep at it, baby. I understand aerobic behavior is very good for the heart.

Claire peers at him, unsure what to make of this. Finally, she accepts that and prepares to leave.

THE ALLEY BARON
That's why I do so much walking myself, for the exercise. Good for the whole cardio-vascular system. I'm just out here for the exercise.

CLAIRe
Why are you here?

THE ALLEY BARON
Are you a social worker?
("no")
Do you want to give me money?
(Claire hesitates,
then "no")
Is your name Eleanor?

CLAIRe
You don't have to tell me anything.

THE ALLEY BARON
What would you like to hear? That I had a good job in a steel mill in West Virginia, but the Japs put us out of business and I lost my home and my family and I'd just like to find an honest job?

CLAIRe
Is that true?

THE ALLEY BARON

No. I was a poet. I took large quantities of certain substances. I tried to stop but I failed. After a while, these substances gave me the ability to see into people's hearts.

Claire seems to shrink back a little.

THE ALLEY BARON

Oh, that scares you. He's a nut case, you think. This guy is an escapee from a mental hospital. Well, I got news for you. I'm no escapee. They let me go. They let us all go. They closed the joint down.

Claire nods her understanding.

THE ALLEY BARON

We moved the whole show to your neighborhood. The streets are crawling with us. There's a coconut under every palm tree.

(looks at her a moment)

What are you nodding about? You think you understand something? You don't understand shit. I can't stomach the way you people look at me. I won't take your contempt, baby.

CLAIRe

Is that what you see in my heart, contempt? Tell me. You can see into my heart, is that what you see there?

The Alley Baron now appears to be brought up short for the first time. He looks away, then gives her an extended sidelong glance. Finally, he faces her straight again, looking into her heart through her eyes. After several beats--

THE ALLEY BARON

No.

CLAIRe

What? What do you see?

THE ALLEY BARON

Pain.

Claire reacts.

THE ALLEY BARON

You've got everything you thought you wanted, but all you feel is loss. You know how lucky you are, but everyday you feel more depressed. You think if you don't find a way to give, you're going to die.

Claire looks at him in new way, but she tries to hide it.

CLAIRe

I'll bet you tell that to all the girls.

(he continues to look at her, unsmiling)

You're a fake. Like one of those fortune tellers that tell you "you're looking for a deeper love", or "a great opportunity is on the horizon". So long, pal.

He waves her off, dismissively.

THE ALLEY BARON

Fine. Get away from me. Leave me alone.

Again, he starts away. Claire turns in the opposite direction and gets ready to run. He speaks without looking at her--

THE ALLEY BARON

Just make sure you keep the baby... You need her as much as she needs you.

Claire spins around to look at him and WE FREEZE. This image of her face, hair flying around her, TURNS TO WHITE and we are--

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING (CANOGA PARK) --DAY

101

In the blinding glare of a Valley afternoon. Mack sits on the hood of the Lexus looking across the street at something. Behind him is an apartment building, not terrible, not great. On the second floor walkway, Simon and Deborah emerge from an open apartment and look off in the same direction as Mack. They talk about the apartment, then Deborah goes back inside as Simon comes down the steps.

IN THE REVERSE ANGLE we see this mixed, working class neighborhood of similarly designed apartment buildings. There is a lot of activity around, most of it gravitating around the public park across the street, an oasis of trees and grass and courts. Kids swarm about, mothers sit and talk. Simon appears next to Mack and leans against the car.

SIMON

It's big for the money.

MACK

It's not beautiful, but they keep it up pretty good.

SIMON

They got their share of gangs out here, too.

MACK

(nods)

But they don't run the place. Not yet, anyway.

Simon looks over where Mack is looking. He laughs.

SIMON

I guess Kelley would eventually adjust.

THEIR POV. Kelley is at the top of a jungle gym in the park. There are other kids climbing near her. It's not like she's made friends, but she's already dealing with them. Mack chuckles. Simon looks back at the apartment house.

SIMON

Deborah's really confused. It's a big move. I don't know what to tell her, either.

He looks at Mack and then reaches out and touches him on the shoulder.

SIMON

Either way, thank you, man.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD --DAY

102

A lovely mountain vista, a two-lane highway. Quiet, birds, wind. Then, from around the bend, the labored ROAR of the big camp bus. It disturbs the peace mightily and rolls on by.

INT/EXT. CAMP BUS --DAY

103

The kids are coming home. The interior of the bus is rocking. Lots of movement, noise, emotion. We MOVE THROUGH IT to--

An ANGLE ON a seat, where Roberto and Amanda are together, mostly aware of each other. With the ANGLE REMAINING THE SAME, we begin--

A SERIES OF SHOTS of Roberto and Amanda on the ride back to town. They make out, they laugh with unseen friends, they stare into each others eyes, whisper, and hold each other. Whizzing by outside, the scene steadily progresses from verdant lushness to flat dryness to ugly outskirts to concrete metropolis.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT --DAY

104

Claire waits with a large contingent of Parents, mostly mothers, for the return. She is talking to a father named TYLER.

TYLER

...last year he didn't write at all. We had to call the camp to make sure he was still there. This year we told him he had to write once a week or we'd come up and visit him. That worked. How 'bout Roberto?

CLAIRe

You know that postcard the counselors force them to write the first day in order to get dinner? We got that.

They both laugh. Another Couple, CATHY and STEVE FOX, approach Claire somewhat shyly, as Tyler drifts off to a friend.

CATHY

Excuse me. Are you Roberto's mother?

CLAIRe

(doesn't know them)

Yes.

CATHY

We're Amanda's parents.

Claire is friendly, smiles and nods, but doesn't know who they're talking about.

STEVE

(offers hand)

I'm Steve Fox. This is my wife Cathy.

CLAIRe

Hi... Claire.

CATHY

We can't wait to meet Roberto.

STEVE

I feel like we already know him just from Amanda's letters.

Claire is starting to catch up, though it's all news to her.

CLAIRe

I'm sorry. I'm afraid Roberto doesn't write as much as he should.

STEVE
We're really pleased about
Thanksgiving.

CLAIRES
Thanksgiving...

CATHY
It's good of you to let Roberto come
to San Diego.

Claire looks a trifle stricken. Cathy sees it.

CATHY
Gosh, I'm sorry. I think you may not
have heard everything about this
summer.

CLAIRES
I think I'm starting to get the
picture.

INT./EXT. CAMP BUS --DAY

105

The bus pulls into the parking lot. Roberto and Amanda can see
Claire talking to the Foxes.

AMANDA
There's my parents.

ROBERTO
Which ones?

AMANDA
There.

ROBERTO
Oh god, they're talking to my mother.

Amanda and Roberto exchange a look, like they've seen something
unpleasant. But then they're kissing again.

EXT. PARKING LOT --DAY

106

Claire rearranges some safety equipment-- lantern, flares, tools--
in the trunk of her car and turns to face Roberto. But he's not
there, only his huge, heavy duffle bag sitting on the ground.
Claire searches the area.

CLAIRES POV. Across the crowded parking lot, the Foxes' car sits
waiting to leave. The parents sit calmly in the front seat,
talking. The back door is still open. A short distance behind the
car, in the shade of a tree, the only semblance of privacy
available, Amanda and Roberto share a last, soulful embrace.

INT/EXT. CLAIRE'S CAR --DAY

107

Claire is driving, Roberto next to her.

ROBERTO

They were so relieved I wasn't Puerto Rican.

CLAIRe

She didn't explain that in all the many, many letters she wrote to her parents?

ROBERTO

I hope they're not bigots or something.

CLAIRe

So do you want to tell me about it?

ROBERTO

What?

She shoots him a look.

CLAIRe

What happened this summer.

ROBERTO

At camp? Camp was okay.

She gives up, for now. She reaches over and grabs his long, long hair.

CLAIRe

I'm glad you're back, kid. I missed you.

ROBERTO

I missed you, too. I'm sorry about that Thanksgiving thing.

CLAIRe

We'll talk to your father about it.

ROBERTO

But it's okay with you?

CLAIRe

I didn't say that. Let's talk to Dad about it.

ROBERTO

" But your mind is open?

CLAIRe

Roberto!

ROBERTO

Okay, remain calm.

CLAIRe

Let me ask you something. How open is your mind?

ROBERTO

Is this going to be about my hair?

CLAIRe

No. This is something pretty big.

ROBERTO

(immediately worried)

About me?

CLAIRe

Only partly. It involves you.

Roberto is relieved, then suddenly very worried.

ROBERTO

Are you and dad splitting?

Claire is taken aback. For a moment she can't speak.

CLAIRe

Why do you say that?

ROBERTO

Is that it?

CLAIRe

No. Absolutely no. What would make you say a thing like that? Do we look like people who are about to split?

ROBERTO

I don't know. People do it all the time and they look like they're fine.

CLAIRe

I'm wild for your father. Have we given you any sign that we're having trouble?

Roberto shrugs, looks away.

ROBERTO

So what were you going to say?

CLAIRe

Wait a minute! Answer me.

ROBERTO

(several beats)

Sometimes it looks like you're both kinda unhappy. Okay? Maybe I misunderstood. It just seemed that way a lot before I went away.

CLAIRe

(shaken)

Really?

ROBERTO

(nods)

But look, I'm glad I'm wrong. That would be horrible. I hope you never split. I'm sorry I said it. Now tell me what you were going to say.

Claire is still swooning. Has her child seen things more clearly than she?

ROBERTO

What do I need an open mind about?

CLAIRe

Maybe we should talk about it later.

ROBERTO

Mom! How can you do that to me? Pretend I never said anything and tell me.

She looks over at him, her mind racing.

CLAIRe

Your father and I are discussing whether to adopt a little girl.

Roberto is literally rocked in his seat, his back banging against the passenger door.

ROBERTO

What?!

SCENE 108 OMITTED (CONT'D)

108*

EXT. JANE'S APARTMENT HOUSE (PALMS) --NIGHT

109

Simon leads Jane to his Camaro at the curb. They're dancing the awkward first-date-ballet. He opens the door for her and helps her into the low car, closes the door and heads around the back for the driver's side. When he is behind the trunk, he stops, takes a breath and shakes off his tension, all the while looking in the rear window at the back of Jane's head. Finally, he gets in the car.

INT/EXT. SIMON'S CAR --NIGHT

110

Simon settles into the driver's seat with a big smile.

SIMON

Okay.

JANE

I thought you were changing your mind.

Simon, caught, laughs big.

SIMON

No, no way. It's just been a while since I did this.

JANE

You haven't been going out?

SIMON

Oh, I've been out a little. I just can't remember the last time I was...

(how to say)

...set up.

JANE

(laughs)

Fixed up...

SIMON

Yeah!

JANE

Well, what do you think so far?

SIMON

So far, it's good. I like it. I'm just a little surprised...

JANE

Why? What'd you expect?

SIMON

Oh, it's not you. I'm just surprised at how nervous I am.

JANE

Yeah, me too.

SIMON

Yeah?

(Jane acknowledges it with that sweet smile)

Well, that's good. At least now we know that much about each other.

(looks at her a beat)

Mack must've had some reason to think this would work. I guess you've known him a while, huh?

JANE

(makes a face, shakes her head)

I don't know him at all.

SIMON

Really? Wow. I don't really know him much either. That's funny

They both wonder over that a moment, then their gaze meets.

SIMON

Maybe we're the only two black people he ever met.

They both laugh as Simon turns the ignition and gets them going.

EXT. MACK AND CLAIRE'S STREET --NIGHT

111

Quiet. A Westec Security patrol car glides slowly up street and disappears. Now another car appears from the around the corner and rolls down the block. It is Dee's car.

INT/EXT. DEE'S CAR --NIGHT

112

The RADIO is playing softly in the car. Dee knows exactly what she's looking for. As she comes to Mack and Claire's house, she slows down even more and turns her head to hold it in her view for the longest possible time. Then she drives away.

INT. DEN, MACK'S HOUSE --NIGHT

113

Roberto has Sports Center muted on the television. He watches it * as he talks to Amanda on the phone.

ROBERTO

...yeah, I guess. But it's a little disturbing when you think your mother's wigging out.

(listens)

I know that, Amanda. It's that-- they're always looking at their friends with babies and talking about how much work it is and how they're glad they don't have to do this part or that part of it anymore--

Amanda interrupts him vigorously. We can see that he's a little surprised by her vehemence.

ROBERTO

(defensive)

No, both of them said that... Yes, I'm sure... Well, yeah, maybe him a little more...

(he laughs, talks softer)
I'd like to be there in San Diego right now, you know that. I'd know what to do.

(listens, smiling)

I like the way you get indignant.

(listens)

Look, it's not that big a thing for me. It's not like she'd be my sister-- well, I guess she would be, but it's not like we're gonna be real close. Christ, it just occurred to me, they'd be close to sixty--

(said like it's the oldest known age)

-- when she's ready to go to college. That's almost sick.

(listens, laughs)

Okay, it's not sick. But it approaches sick.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM --NIGHT

33

114

The lights are on. The news is on TV, muted: there's a report about the B-2 bomber, with military footage and a graphic about cost overruns. Mack and Claire are next to each other in the bed, which is cluttered with all the magazines, calendars and appointment books they've used over the course of the evening. Claire sits against the headboard, her legs under the covers. Mack lies on top of the blanket, looking at her.

CLAIRe

I think you're being too hard on yourself. You're trying to help.

MACK

You think moving to Canoga Park is going to save that family? I wouldn't want to move to Canoga Park.

CLAIRe

Who said you have to save anybody? Maybe living out there will be a little safer, maybe the kids'll be a little less likely to get hurt. Who knows? I don't know and you don't know. Besides, they're not going to go unless they want to. And you're not responsible for them, anyway. You just happen to know a guy who owns an apartment house.

Mack looks at her a while, thinking.

MACK

Okay, what am I doing fixing Simon up with a girl I don't even know?

(Claire shrugs)

It's like I'm fifteen again and any idea I get has to be acted on immediately. I just can't wait to get it into the world. I do this shit and the next morning I'm astounded. I'm like Dr.Jekyll or something.

CLAIRe

Has it occurred to you that it doesn't matter all that much? Why should you be the one person on earth who always acts rationally?

MACK

Forget rational, I'm completely out of control. Stop me before I kill.

CLAIRe

So, good for you. Aren't you sick of trying to be in control all the time? I am.

She suddenly can't stand having the magazines and stuff on the bed anymore. She gathers them all together rather neatly, then throws the whole stack on the floor. She has become more and more agitated.

CLAIRe

Mack, you think I want that baby because I've got some hole in my life or I think I'm going to have some hole in my life. But that's not it. Or, if it is it, it's just a part of it. That baby needs someone to love it and take care of it.

MACK

Does it have to be you?

CLAIRe

I believe there's a reason I found it.

MACK

Claire.

CLAIRe

I do. You can pooh-pooh it all you want, but I'll always believe that. And you probably do, too. You told me you think there was a reason this guy, this Simon, showed up and saved you.

MACK

I didn't say that.

CLAIRe

Yes, you did. That's exactly what you said the other night.

MACK

I did?

CLAIRe

How do you think I feel about that baby? What if I hadn't heard it? What if no one had heard it? We would have read about it in the Times. "My god, they found a dead baby in the bushes on Carmelina. Oh, Mack, I must have run right by it the other morning."

CLAIRES (CONT'D)
But that didn't happen. I found it
and maybe I saved its life, just like
maybe Simon saved yours.

MACK
(shakes his head to clear
it)
What are you saying?

CLAIRES
Something's happened and you can't go
back and have it not happen. There's
no explaining it, but it's happened.
Some kind of connection has been made
and it has to be played out. That's
why you can't stay out of Simon's
business. It's like an itch you've
got to scratch.

MACK
Claire, you're talking about a
lifelong commitment, just because
you happened to run by those bushes.
I'm not going to be dealing with this
guy for the rest of my life.

CLAIRES
How do you know? How do you know that
this man isn't going to be your
friend till the day you die?

(she touches him)
What if these are miracles, Mack?
Maybe we don't have any experience
with miracles, so we're slow to
recognize them.

Mack looks at her hard. She's really interesting to him. After a
moment, he presses his fingertips into his eye sockets.

MACK
I'm getting a terrific headache.

CLAIRES
No you're not!

MACK
(reacts)
I'm not?

CLAIRES
I'll tell you why I reject your
headache--

MACK
--Please--

CLAIRe
--because it's inappropriate.

MACK
Inappropriate?

CLAIRe
If I'm right and these events are really miracles, then it's just an inappropriate response to get a headache in the presence of a miracle. It's...tasteless!

EXT. JANE'S APARTMENT HOUSE (PALMS) --NIGHT

115

Dee, looking a little bad, walks to the curb where her car is parked. She's been looking for Jane. As she gets in her car, she looks up the block, but there is no sign of anybody. Dee drives away. WE SIT THERE A MOMENT, until--

Simon's car appears around the corner at the end of the block and drives up. He parallel parks beautifully in the same spot Dee has just vacated. WE MOVE IN on the passenger side, where Jane is sitting. They are silent a moment, looking at each other.

JANE
Wow!

SIMON
Yeah.

JANE
I don't know about you, but I'm thinking this Mack is some kind of genius.

Simon agrees, smiling broadly.

SIMON
Do you believe in fate?

JANE
I believe in luck.

Simon thinks about that.

JANE
Do you think you should come up?

SIMON
Do I think I should come up? What do you think?

JANE

I think this night has gone just about as well as it possibly could. I don't want to push our luck.

SIMON

(agrees)

That doesn't mean I don't want to come up. Should I walk you in?

Jane shakes her head "no" then leans over and gives him a good kiss.

SIMON

Is it okay to call you at work?

JANE

I'm looking forward to it. This is a feeling I'd like to have at work.

SIMON

What is it?

Jane blushes, then giggles in a way that's incredibly sexy. She gets out of the car, then leans back down into the window. Her voice is very soft--

JANE

Bye, Simon.

SIMON

Say that again.

JANE

Simon.

She knew just what he wanted. She walks into the apartment house. He watches till she's inside, then pulls out, happy.

INT. DEE'S CAR (SUNSET BLVD.) --NIGHT

116

Dee is crying. The RADIO is on LOUD. She pulls up to a stop light, puts her purse into her lap and starts digging for a Kleenex. She doesn't notice that a THUG, who looks like a regular guy, has walked quickly up to the passenger door from the back of the car. He tries to open the door, but it's locked.

He reaches under his jacket and brings out a big wrench. He is just swinging his arm back, when Dee looks up. She's just confused for a second, then he brings the wrench down, SMASHING the window. Dee jumps back in terror. But the guy is suddenly distracted by something behind the car. He turns and runs away between two buildings

It's over too quickly for Dee to get much more upset than she already was. She cries some more. A Police Car pulls up next to

her and MYERS, the shotgun-riding cop, jumps out of the passenger side. The Police Car SQUEALS AWAY around the next corner in pursuit. Myers leans down next to Dee's window, indicating that she should roll it down, which she does.

MYERS
Are you okay?

Dee indicates, through her tears, that she is. But now her car begins to roll slowly forward. Dee hits the brakes too hard.

MYERS
Are you sure?

Dee is trying to get herself together. She continues to nod.

MYERS
Why don't you pull over there for a second?

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. --NIGHT

117

Dee rolls the car to the curb as Myers waves through the cars behind her. Then the young cop walks around onto the sidewalk and leans down to the smashed passenger window.

MYERS
Didn't see him comin', did you?

DEE
(collecting herself)
I still don't know what happened.

MYERS
I guess you were lucky...
(looking at mess)
...even though it might not seem that way right now.

Dee begins to cry again.

MYERS
Pretty scary stuff.

DEE
I was crying before it happened.

MYERS
Really?

DEE
(wiping her face)
I don't cry easily, normally. I'm sorry.

MYERS
Don't apologize. Do you want to get out of there a second? Walk around and catch your breath.

Dee declines, reflexively.

MYERS
Come on, you'll feel better.

He says this in a way that somehow breaks through to Dee. She watches as he walks around the front of the car, opens her door and helps her out. He escorts her gently to the sidewalk, holding her arm in a courtly way.

MYERS
(about to release her arm)
Are you okay?

Dee looks up at him and shakes her head "no", he shouldn't let go just yet. He smiles down at her in a pleased, amused way, and continues to walk with her.

MYERS
Then I guess I better hang on.
(they walk a few steps)
I don't imagine you want to talk about it with a complete stranger...

DEE
I'm in love with a married man.

Myers is taken aback. He just looks at her.

DEE
We haven't been having an affair. He wouldn't do it. We had one night together. One really amazing night.

MYERS
(shy)
Uh-huh.

She looks up at him. She has stopped crying and she wipes her nose one final time.

DEE
Do you think that's awful?

MYERS
Which part?

DEE
All of it.

MYERS
("no")
I think it happens. Has he treated
you bad?

DEE
It hurts. When you love someone and
they don't choose you, it's bad.
That's the way he's been bad to me.

Myers understands that.

DEE
Married men suck... by definition.

Meyers laughs.

DEE
Are you married?
(he shakes his head "no")
Tell the truth.

He stops their walk and turns to her, still holding on to her.

MYERS
I'm not married.
(a beat)
I haven't found the right girl.

She looks at him hard. And he looks right back.

INT. MACK'S OFFICE --DAY

118

Mack is working at his desk. Dee comes in and closes the door.
Mack looks up, distracted.

MACK
What's next?

DEE
Nothing.

Her tone stops him. He puts down his pen. She sits in the chair in
front of his desk. He waits.

DEE
I'm quitting.

He's not shocked, but he's not happy.

MACK
Tell me.

DEE
(sharp)
You make me miserable.

MACK

I'm sorry. I don't want to.

DEE

Stop it.

MACK

What happened?

DEE

This is intolerable. I can't do this anymore. It's sick. I need to go on.

Mack looks at her, understanding.

DEE

Don't act like you're not relieved. I know you are.

MACK

I don't want you to go.

DEE

Do you know what your trouble is? You just never want to be the bad guy. You want everything you do to be okay. But it isn't.

They look at each other. She can't hold the look, so she stands up and goes to the window.

DEE

If you really didn't want this to happen, then you shouldn't have fucked me.

MACK

I'm sorry. I think I've said that before.

DEE

You've denied me in every way you can. Everything I've wanted, you've denied me.

MACK

I've been honest with you all along. Even that night.

DEE

Who gives a shit. Don't you see what you do? Even now, you want to deny me what's rightfully mine.

MACK

Which is?

DEE
To resent the hell out of you.
(turns on him)
To feel totally rejected and hate it.
To hate you for doing it to me.

MACK
I fucked up. But I didn't think I was fucking up when I did it. And I didn't think that the next morning, either.

DEE
You see! You're doing it again. Shut up.
(looks away)
There are a lot of good men out there who are going to treat me like I'm the very thing they want.

They're silent for a while.

DEE
And then, then you do that thing with Jane.

MACK
(confused)
What?

DEE
You know, with the guy, the tow truck guy.

MACK
What about it? What's that got to do with anything?

DEE
You don't know, do you? You don't know why that hurts me so much.

Mack looks at her, puzzled.

DEE
Jane's in love. She thinks this could be the one.

MACK
Is that bad? I thought she was your friend.

DEE

She is my friend. I'm happy for her. But it makes me feel like shit that you're out there finding her the love of her life. And I'm here, what, I'm here like shit. How do you think that's going to make me feel?

MACK

Look, Dee, I understand you're angry with me, but why would--

DEE

Forget it. It doesn't have to make sense.

She crosses to the door.

DEE

I'll stay for two weeks, but you better find someone else.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING (CANOGA PARK) --DAY/DUSK

119

Dusk. Simon and a male Friend take the last boxes and lamps from the back of a U-Haul truck and head in toward the apartment house.

AT THE STAIRS, Simon comes face to face with Otis, coming down.

SIMON

That's all there is. We did it, man.

Otis just glares at him and continues on his way. He's in a fury. Simon and his Friend go up to the apartment. Kelley is playing among the boxes in the living room. Deborah comes out, looking as wiped out as the guys.

SIMON

This is the end of it.

DEBORAH

Good.

She steps to the rail and watches Otis down below. He walks past the back of the U-Haul and crosses the street toward the park. Simon comes back out of the apartment empty-handed and stands next to Deborah, wiping his brow with a towel. They watch Otis cross the street.

DEBORAH

I don't know if he'll even stay here tonight.

Simon puts a hand on her shoulder.

SIMON

Let's have a beer.

EXT. SIDEWALK ALONG PARK --DUSK/NIGHT

120

Otis stops near the fence at edge of the park and pulls out a pack of cigarettes. Lighting up, he watches a group of guys playing basketball in the deepening gloom of the park. A car rolls quietly by in the street behind him and Otis watches it from the corner of his eye as it reaches the corner and disappears.

Otis moves off down the block. Two kids on bikes come whizzing by. They have to veer around Otis, who gives no ground.

AT THE CORNER, Otis leans against the fence, smoking. He looks up.

OTIS' POV. The street lights are long elegant black shapes against the pink sky. Between them, a Helicotor zips through, its ENGINE ROAR muffled by its height. As we watch, THE STREETLIGHTS COME ON with a CLUNK and gradually reach full illumination.

Otis takes a drag and lowers his gaze.

OTIS

This is fucked.

VOICE (O.S.)

(heavy Mexican accent)

What's that, man?

Otis is startled that the voice has come from so close. He looks down into the shadows along the fence. There is the bright orange glow of a joint and CARLOS, a Mexican teenager, raises himself with difficulty from his sitting position next to the fence. He comes into the glow of the streetlights, peering closely at Otis, who watches him with exaggerated nonchalance. Carlos is high.

CARLOS

What you doing, man?

Otis just watches.

CARLOS

No talking, huh? That's cool.

(Otis doesn't respond)

Not too friendly? That's cool.

He holds out his joint to Otis, who waves it off.

CARLOS

That's cool. I guess you don't want no company. You must be new around here, man. I haven't seen you before.

Otis finally responds, nodding.

CARLOS

I thought you was talking to me! I
thought you said I was fucked up.

OTIS

I wasn't talkin' to your sorry ass.

CARLOS

Well, who the fuck were you talking
to, dude? Were you talking to
yourself?

Carlos starts to laugh, then has to put his hand on the fence to steady himself.

CARLOS

I'm really fucked up. You should try
this shit. It'll kill you.

OTIS

No, man, I don't want it.

CARLOS

That's cool.

Out of nowhere, a Car speeds up to the corner. As it approaches and slows, we HEAR VOICES coming from it, yelling.

CAR VOICES

Hey, man!

Que pasa?

Carlos!

Otis dives for cover in the shadows. Carlos, already a little out of it, is left standing alone. He twists around to see where Otis has disappeared to. The BOYS IN THE CAR, Carlos' friends, lean out the windows, laughing and harmless.

BOY #1

What was that, man?

BOY #2

Hey, Carlos, you made that boy crazy.
You must have given him some of that
shitty smoke.

They all laugh. Carlos is still peering into the darkness,

CARLOS

That dude was quick! He musta come
here from Beirut.

(they all laugh)

Where the fuck is he?

DOWN THE BLOCK is Otis, as far from the laughing Boys as he can get while staying in the shadows. He pulls up by a tree, breathing

hard, looking back in the direction of the corner. Humiliated.

Otis stares back there, at the laughing Boys, at the apartment house where he now lives. His eyes dart about. He becomes more agitated. And he begins to run again. Away. Away from all those things. And the CAMERA STAYS CLOSE WITH HIM--

EXT. CANOGA PARK STREETS --DUSK/NIGHT

121

RUNNING, running and sweating, gasping for air, through the shadows and the lights, through the neighborhood streets.

EXT. BURBANK BLVD. (CANOGA PARK) --NIGHT

122

Otis emerges from the neighborhood and rounds the corner onto the well-lit boulevard. We're farther from him now, but still TRACKING RAPIDLY along with him as he sprints down the sidewalk.

UP THE BOULEVARD, a Police Car is patrolling.

INT/EXT. POLICE CAR --NIGHT

123

Two cops, ACE driving and DEUCE at shotgun. Deuce spots Otis running up ahead and points. Ace nods and steps on it. They pull alongside Otis and start shadowing him. Deuce picks up the mike for the loudspeaker.

DEUCE
(over speaker)
Stop running and put your hands
behind your head.

Otis keeps running. Ace and Deuce exchange a look and Deuce repeats his order over the loudspeaker. Otis seems not to hear. Deuce takes his shotgun from its holder on the dash.

ACE
Here we go.

Ace hits the gas and the car speeds ahead of Otis, swerves around the next corner and SQUEALS to a stop.

EXT. STREET CORNER --NIGHT

124

In an instant, Deuce is out of the car and in a crouch, shotgun pumped and aimed at Otis, who is now about 20 yards away and still coming. Ace takes up a position by the driver's door.

DEUCE
Halt! Stop and put your hands behind
you head!

Otis runs toward the cops. Now, he seems to become aware of them for them for the first time. And finally, he slows to a stop, gasping for breath, sweat pouring.

DEUCE
Get down on your stomach!

OTIS
What?

DEUCE
Down, asshole, and I mean now! On your stomach!

Otis is confused for a moment. Deuce tenses, watching Otis' hands nervously. Otis sinks to his knees, a disbelieving look on his face. Slowly, he lowers himself to his stomach. Ace is already around the car and on Otis. He puts his knee on Otis' back, handcuffs him, and frisks him roughly. From Otis' pockets Ace removes a pack of cigarettes and three dollars.

ACE
You know what stop means?

Otis can barely get a sound out.

DEUCE
Where you going in such a hurry, pal?

OTIS
(gasping)
Nowhere... I'm just runnin'.

DEUCE
What are you running from?

OTIS
Nothing!...I live around here.

ACE
Where?

OTIS
(long pause)
I don't know...

ACE
You don't know? What's that supposed to mean?

OTIS
Back there... across from the park.

ACE
What park?

Otis lays his head down on the sidewalk. Something goes out of him. His cheeks are wet, from sweat maybe.

OTIS
I don't know.

EXT. DEBORAH'S APARTMENT BUILDING --NIGHT

125

The police car is parked in front of the U-Haul. Ace and Deuce appear from the apartment house courtyard, get in the car and drive away.

INT/EXT. DEBORAH'S APARTMENT --NIGHT

126

Simon's friend is outside on the walkway, a can of beer in his hand, leaning on the railing. Deborah stands frozen in the center of the living room, staring down the hall. Simon comes up the steps, having walked the cops down, and comes into the apartment. His gaze follows Deborah's.

Otis is leaning against the hallway wall down near the bathroom.

OTIS
They almost smoked me. See a nigger running around here, they smoke you, ask questions later.

He violently kicks the closet door. It smashes under his foot. He steps into the bathroom and throws a deadly glare back at Simon and Deborah.

OTIS
I ain't stayin' here, I tell you that! I fuckin' ain't!

He slams the door of the bathroom. Deborah runs her hand through her hair, and turns away.

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE WESTSIDE --DAY

127

A traffic HELICOPTOR from a radio station zooms by and we HEAR the report--

TRAFFIC REPORTER
... three car collision on the San Diego Freeway north of National Boulevard, only one lane is open. And Ted, I got to tell you, the surface streets are no picnic right now, either. It's a jungle down there...

We're off the Helicopter now and looking down at the heavy traffic below, zeroing in on Mack's Lexus.

INT/EXT. MACK'S CAR --DAY

128

Roberto is learning to drive. Mack sits in the passenger seat and he's trying with all his might to conceal his concern. When he gives an instruction, there is an exaggerated calm in his voice. But he is watching intently in all directions, trying to be Roberto's eyes and avert catastrophe.

ROBERTO

...and I realized that it wasn't really both you and Mom who were always saying how glad you were you didn't have little kids anymore. It was really just you. I mean, when I thought about it. Mom never really said that...

MACK

Which way are you going to turn up here?

ROBERTO

Right.

MACK

Okay, so what do you want to do now?

ROBERTO

Get over in the right lane.

Roberto looks in the rear view mirror and turns the wheel right to change lanes.

MACK

WAIT! Don't go!

Roberto swerves back into his original lane as a car speeds by him on the right.

MACK

(calm voice again)

You can't just go because you want to, you've got to make sure it's clear.

ROBERTO

I messed up.

MACK

It's better to go ten blocks out of your way than to try to get over when it's impossible.

ROBERTO

I thought I looked. I messed up.

He's looking in the rear view mirror again. He twists to look over his right shoulder and makes a quick lane change, surprising Mack, who's relieved when they make it unscathed. Then Mack sees something up ahead and tenses--

MACK

Watch this guy getting out of the car-- Slow down, slow, SLOW!

They glide by the careless Car Exiter, missing him by a foot.

MACK

When I tell you to stop, you've got to stop.

ROBERTO

You didn't say to stop, you said to slow down.

MACK

It won't matter if you hit another car, but you can't hit a person. That's the most important thing. And people are such ass-holes you've got to watch out for the dumbest stuff.

Roberto nods his understanding. They come to a corner and turn right.

ROBERTO

So, I was thinking, why should I be telling Mom she's crazy to want this baby. I don't want her telling me my stuff is crazy. Maybe it isn't so crazy for her.
It's her life.

MACK

And mine.

ROBERTO

And yours, too, I guess. Although, she's really the one who's gonna be most involved.

MACK

Believe me, it effects us both a lot... Look, why don't we concentrate on what we're doing here. What are you going to do up here?

ROBERTO

Turn left.

118

Roberto twists his whole torso around to the left to look into the lane on his left. The car swerves that way just from his body turn. Then he really goes for it, changing lanes quickly.

MACK

Really? It's kind of busy here, isn't it?

ROBERTO

Dad, I've got to learn how to do it.

MACK

No, you're right.

Roberto slides the car smoothly into the left turn lane as the light goes to red. The two cars in front of him make the left turn ahead of a thick river of cross traffic. Roberto eases the car up to the head of the left turn lane.

MACK

That's good. That's nice, right here.

ROBERTO

But think of it this way-- If you only had one life to live, which you do, and you really wanted to do something and Mom said, "No, you can't do that." How would you feel about that?

Mack looks over at him a moment.

MACK

Look, let's not talk. Let's think about this turn.

ROBERTO

Right.

MACK

What are you watching for?

ROBERTO

The light.

MACK

What else? What's the most important thing?

ROBERTO

Don't hit a person.

MACK

I mean here.

Roberto smiles, he was kidding Mack.

MACK

Come on, don't fuck around, this is no joke.

ROBERTO

I know. Okay. The most important thing is that those cars have really stopped.

MACK

Right, because--

ROBERTO

(he's heard this a lot)
--because some idiot is always liable to run the red light.

MACK

Right. And what else are you looking for?

ROBERTO

These cars on the cross street.

The light turns to green and Roberto immediately moves out into the intersection. One of the cars from the cross street makes a late turn in front of him. Both Mack and Roberto tense, but neither says anything. The heavy flow of cars on Roberto's street speeds by on either side of the Lexus.

MACK

Okay, ready? The light's going to change here.

Roberto leans forward, biting his lip in concentration. His eyes dart between the light above and the oncoming rush of traffic.

The signal goes to yellow, then red. Roberto hesitates. The car behind him immediately HONKS long and hard. Roberto reacts, hits the gas and heads into the left turn with a burst of speed.

Mack looks with horror at the rush of traffic from the cross street which is already deep into the intersection and not giving any sign of letting Roberto in.

MACK

STOP!

Roberto hits the brakes hard, throwing both of them forward against their seatbelts. The closest car of the crossing traffic swerves by them within a foot; the Driver yells something behind his window and flips them the bird.

MACK

Fuck you!

Roberto and the Lexus are now stranded in the middle of the intersection, stopping half the traffic. A half dozen HORNS ERUPT at once. Roberto is frantic. The car behind the one that almost hit them stops and waves them in.

MACK

Okay, this guy's letting us in. Go, go.

Roberto makes the turn. He's deeply shaken. Mack sees it and twists around to look over his right shoulder.

MACK

Okay, when I tell you, you're going to be able to get over to the right lane. We'll pull over up here...

Okay, you can go now.

Roberto makes the lane change and a little way down he pulls the car to the curb. He looks over at Mack, close to tears, but what he says is--

ROBERTO

Shit.

Mack reaches over and puts his hand on Roberto's shoulder. His voice is very calm, almost relaxed.

MACK

That guy was a cretin. The thing is, it's so crazy out there you've got to react really fast. If you're going, you've only got a split second to do it. Otherwise the cross traffic will whack you.

ROBERTO

I'm sorry, Dad.

MACK

Hey, this is difficult stuff. Making a left turn in L. A. is one of the harder things you're going to learn in life.

ROBERTO

That guy was almost in your lap.

They both laugh.

MACK

"This town stinks.

ROBERTO
Do you want to drive?

MACK
Hell no, I'm too shook up!
(they laugh)
Let's get out of here.

Roberto accepts that with fifteen year old resilience and immediately looks over his left shoulder to pull out, which he does without incident. Mack continues to look at Roberto for a while, then out the right side, away from his son. Finally--

MACK
So I guess we're going to get this baby, huh?

Roberto smiles. And drives.

INT. MACK AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM --NIGHT

129

Middle of the night. Mack and Claire are sleeping. The phone RINGS, loud in the silence. Mack reaches over and picks it up, but Claire wakes with a start, too.

MACK
(into phone)
Yeah?... What?... No, we got no Farhoud here. You've got the wrong number...
(reacts to an expletive)
Oh really? Well fuck you also.

He hangs up and lies back.

CLAIRe
Who?

MACK
Farhoud... you know him?

CLAIRe
My heart's pounding.

MACK
C'mere.

He lifts his arm and she comes to him, settling right in to the familiar contours. He strokes her hair.

CLAIRe
Everything seems so close together.

MACK
What?

CLAIRe

All the good and bad things in the world. Everything. I feel it even in myself, and us, our marriage.

MACK

I love you, Claire. I like living my life with you.

CLAIRe

Do you? Because I love you so much, Mack.

She moves into him, kissing him passionately. They begin to make love.

OMIT SCENE 130

131*

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT, CITY PARK (CANOGA PARK) --DUSK

Deborah, still dressed in her Ralph's Market uniform, crosses the park toward the basketball court. There's plenty of activity here, but Deborah is very much alone.

Deborah comes up to the court. Kelley is among several young Girls and Boys playing a pick-up game supervised by a Park Attendant. Kelley moves easily and gracefully through the action. She calls for the ball and puts in a lay-up, ending the game. Deborah applauds.

A131

EXT. CITY PARK -- DUSK

A FEW MINUTES LATER. Deborah and Kelley make their way toward their apartment house.

KELLEY

Is Otis coming home tonight, Mama?

DEBORAH

No, Kelley. I told you.

KELLEY

When will we see him again?

DEBORAH

(a long pause)

I don't know, honey.

"
They move off into the shadows.

EXT. COMMISSARY (FOX LOT) --DAY

132

Mack comes out of the commissary with Davis, who is heavily dependent on a beautiful, carved walking stick. Davis displays a serious limp as they move down the path toward a shiny black golf cart with an elaborate "D" symbol painted on it.

*

*

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DAVIS

Drive me over to the stage. ..

MACK

My car is over by your office.

DAVIS

You can take the cart back. I'll have someone pick me up.

Davis maneuvers himself painfully into the passenger seat of the cart. (This wound refuses to just go away.) He extends his bad leg out onto a specially constructed side runner. Mack drives.

*

MACK

I've got to get back to my office.

DAVIS

Relax, will you? Nobody's going to get deported while you're driving me to Stage 16. Go down there and take a right.

They head across the lot.

MACK

We spent the whole meal talking about Vanessa and your impending marriage and I forgot to congratulate you on the new direction your career is taking.

DAVIS

On the what?

MACK

Claire told me.

(Davis gives him a quizzical look)

You know, about the violence in your movies. She was so pleased.

DAVIS

(processing slowly)

Claire told you?... Oh, that!
Fuck that.

MACK

What?

DAVIS

That's over. I must have been delirious for a few weeks there.

MACK

(checks to see if he's kidding)

Oh, this is bad. Man, I don't want to be the one who tells Claire you've changed your mind.

DAVIS

"Changed" nothing, I've regained my senses. I was talking like a moron.

Mack is silent for a moment. A Young Executive is walking in the other direction; Davis slaps palms with him as they glide past.

MACK

What happened?

DAVIS

Nothing happened. It never happened.
Look, Mack, I'm an artist. Go ahead,
laugh, everybody does--

(Mack laughs)

--nobody in this town wants to admit
that a producer is an artist. But I
know what I do. I know how many lame-
o directors I've had to carry on my
back every step of the way and then
watch as they take all the glory and
reviews and awards...

MACK

(tickled)

Which awards were those?

DAVIS

...but that's okay. I don't mind
working in modest anonymity, that's
the way Thalberg did it too...

MACK

If they're so lame-o, why do you hire
them?

DAVIS

Because I haven't got time to do it
myself, hanging around the set during
all that boring lighting and shit. I
let them do that. But that's all
beside the point. The point is... the
point is...

He's lost his train of thought. He is craning his neck to look
down the alley between two stages.

DAVIS

Turn around.

(Mack is confused)

Turn around and go down between
there!

Mack wheels the cart around and goes down between the stages. A
Girl in a Miniskirt is walking down here. They come up behind her.

DAVIS

What was I saying?

MACK

The point is...

DAVIS

" ...there's a gulf in this country, an
ever-widening abyss...

DAVIS (CONT'D)

..between the people who have stuff
and the ones who don't have shit.
It's like a big hole has opened up in
the ground, big as the fucking Grand
Canyon, and what's come pouring
out...

Davis has been staring at the back of this Girl in a Miniskirt, as
has Mack. Now they pass her.

DAVIS

(to girl, big smile)

Hi.

GIRL IN MINISKIRT

(big smile back)

Hi.

DAVIS

(to girl)

I'm Davis, building 53, the whole
building. Ask for me. I think I may
have something for you.

The girl, a secretary, gives him a skeptical, amused look and
turns into a stage. Davis turns frontwards again, makes a face
somewhere between pain and pleasure, and--

DAVIS

This is the greatest town on earth.
Go left up here. Where was I?

MACK

... the Grand Canyon...

DAVIS

...yeah, and what's come out of this
big hole is an eruption of rage. And
rage makes violence and that violence
is real, Mack. And nothing's going to
make it go away until somebody
changes something-- which is not
going to happen.

Davis points Mack around a corner.

DAVIS

And you may not like it... even I may
not like it, but I'm not going to
pretend it isn't there, because that
is a lie. And when Art lies it
becomes worthless. So I've got to
keep on telling the truth, even if it
scares the shit out of me just like
it scares the shit out of you.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Even if I know it means that that motherfucker can blow a big old hole in my leg-- for a watch!-- and I'm going to walk with a fucking limp for the rest of my life and count myself lucky.

(muses)

That's what's so amazing, you know? What we count as lucky today. Our criteria for lucky has changed a bit.

MACK

Davis, we're not talking about great Art here.

DAVIS

Says you, Mr. Snob, Mr. Arbiter-of-Taste, Mr. Immigration Lawyer-to-the-Arts.

(Mack laughs)

I know this though-- there's so much rage going around we're damn lucky we've got the movies to help us vent a little of it.

MACK

Oh, Davis, that line is so tired I'm shocked you'd use it.

DAVIS

Do you think it's so easy to do what I do? Do you think just anyone can make the crap I make?

Mack looks over at Davis. As usual, he's not sure what to take seriously. Davis is poker-faced, conceding nothing.

MACK

Wasn't there something about the "life force", "life affirming", something like that? I thought that's what Claire told me...

DAVIS

This is life, pal! That's what I'm trying to get through your thick, sanctimonious skull. There has always been violence, there will always be violence. Violence and evil and men with big guns. My movies reflect what's going on, they don't make what's going on.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

And if I happen to do it better than anybody, than I've got a bigger responsibility than anybody to serve it up. Stop right here.

They are at the door to Stage 16. Davis painfully lifts himself out of the golf cart. When he's on steady ground, leaning heavily on his walking stick, he turns to Mack. His tone is soothing, omniscient.

DAVIS

Mack, did you ever see a movie called "Sullivan's Travels"?

(Mack shakes "no")

That's part of your problem, you know, you haven't seen enough movies. All of life's riddles are answered in the movies.

(Mack's heard this before)

It's a story about a man who loses his way. He forgets for a moment just what he was set on earth to do.

(Davis points at Mack)

Check it out.

Davis turns and starts limping toward the stage door. The CAMERA PULLS SLOWLY AWAY, taking in the doorway, the golf cart and the huge blank face of the soundstage, a blinding white in the sun. Davis pulls open the door and turns to wave at Mack, not unlike Jimmy Durante at the end of his show. Then he disappears into the blackness.

133

INT. SIMON'S APARTMENT --NIGHT

Simon and Jane sit close together in front of the TTY machine, communicating with Annie in Washington, D.C. They're having a good time. Jane is on the keyboard, her trained fingers flying. The messages are once again printed across the bottom of the frame like subtitles.

JANE

I'm looking forward to meeting you when you come home for Thanksgiving. I have a turkey recipe that is world-famous.

ANNIE

Jane, you are an incredible typist. Do you always talk this fast?

Simon and Jane laugh.

JANE

No.

ANNIE
You're the first woman Dad has ever
let talk to me on this machine. Is
there love going on out there?

Jane's fingers hesitate over the keys. She and Simon look at each other.

INT. OFFICE, LARGE LAW FIRM --DAY

134

Dee is being interviewed by a WOMAN LAWYER in her office. The woman is looking over Dee's resume on her desk.

DEE
...and I just feel I'd really like to work for a woman lawyer this time. I never have and I think it might be a good thing.

WOMAN LAWYER
Well, I don't know if you'll find it much different, Dee, but frankly, with your experience and qualifications, I have no desire to discourage you.

Dee smiles, pleased.

WOMAN LAWYER

I am curious, though, Dee...Your former employer has written you the most glorious reccomendation. Why did you decide to leave him?

Dee looks at her.

EXT. SIMON'S APARTMENT --NIGHT

A135.

Simon walks from his car to his front door. There, in the shadows, is the sprawled form of Otis. The boy comes slowly to life as Simon kneels beside him.

SIMON

Otis, what's the matter? Are you okay?

OTIS

(weakly)

Yeah, I'm all right...

As Simon helps him, Otis comes up into the light. There is blood on his clothes and his face is bruised.

SIMON

You're hurt, boy!

OTIS
It ain't my blood...

SIMON
What happened?

Otis doesn't want to tell him. After a beat--

OTIS
I seen some bad shit, Simon.

Otis begins to cry, silently. Simon takes him in his arms.

SIMON
Otis, you may not believe this, but I'm gonna try to convince you of one thing-- what you are right now isn't all you can be.

Simon helps him to his feet. Otis tries to walk, but he can't. His body sags against Simon.

INT. SIMON'S APARTMENT (ANNIE'S BEDROOM) --NIGHT

B135*

Otis has been cleaned up. He's in his shorts and one of Simon's white tee-shirts, which hangs loosely on him, as Simon helps him into bed. Otis is so tired, he's barely lucid.

OTIS
...Can I just sleep for a while?

SIMON
(pulling the covers up)
Boy, you can stay as long as you want.

INT. SIMON'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) --NIGHT

C135*

Simon comes out of the bedroom and goes to the sofa. He sits down and lets his head loll all the way back. He is very still.

INT. FRONT HALL, MACK AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE --NIGHT

135

The doorbell rings. Roberto comes bounding down the front steps and opens the little viewing window in the front door. He obviously doesn't know the visitor and makes no move to open the door.

ROBERTO
Hello.

Simon is standing on the front step.

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SIMON

Hi. Is this Mack's house?

ROBERTO

Uh-huh.

SIMON
I'm Simon, a friend of his. Is he around?

Roberto knows the name and is immediately interested. He opens the door and motions Simon in.

ROBERTO

Hi!

SIMON
(offers his hand, which Roberto takes)
You must be Roberto Clemente.

ROBERTO
(laughs, then with accent)
Arriba, arriba!

SIMON
You play right field?

ROBERTO
Nah, I hate baseball.
(Simon laughs)
It's my father's great sorrow.

Mack appears at the top of the stairs.

MACK
Hey, Simon! How you doing?

SIMON
Good, Mack. I'm sorry to just drop by like this...

MACK
Bullshit, I'm glad you did. Come on up here, I'll show you something.

Simon heads up the stairs. Roberto watches him with interest for a moment, then follows him up.

INT. HALLWAY AND MASTER BEDROOM --NIGHT

Mack leads the group into the Master Bedroom.

MACK
Claire's in here. I want her to meet you.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM --NIGHT

Claire is giving the Baby a bath.

MACK
Claire, look who stopped by. This is
Simon.

CLAIRe
(very interested)
Oh, hi. It's nice to meet you.

SIMON
Same here. What have you got there?

CLAIRE
This? This is the world's
slipperiest baby.

SIMON
She's a beauty.

MACK
Yeah, I think she looks a lot like
me.

Roberto hangs by the door, watching. Claire lifts the Baby's head.

CLAIRE
Mack, squirt a little of that shampoo
on here, will you? Just a touch...

SIMON
What's her name?

ROBERTO
Bill Mazeroski.

MACK
(throws him a look as Simon
laughs)
We're still debating it.

CLAIRE
(to baby)
Okay, Molly, here comes your favorite
part.

Claire gives Simon a sly smile as she motions for Mack to pour a
cup full of water over the Baby's head.

CLAIRE
Mack's still debating with himself.

MACK
(pouring carefully)
As you can see, Simon, I'm the
unquestioned ruler of this house.
They live in awe of me...

Smiling, Simon turns to Roberto.

SIMON
You like babies?

ROBERTO
Compared to what?

CLAIREE
Tell him the truth.
(to Simon, indicating
Roberto)
He's been incredible.

Roberto is embarrassed.

ROBERTO
She's okay, I guess... for a
beginner.

EXT. DRIVEWAY (MACK'S HOUSE) --NIGHT

138

Mack and Simon are shooting baskets on the garage in the light of some floodlights placed for exactly this purpose. They're both pretty good and, in a very relaxed way, they're sizing each other up as players.

Mack goes up to grab a rebound and suddenly Simon is above him, snatching it away. Mack gives him a look and they both laugh.

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MACK
You're kinda big, aren't ya?

SIMON
You look like you're about ready to
play.

MACK

Maybe... maybe. I want to see you
shoot from the outside.

SIMON

(laughs)

Mack, what made you get me together
with Jane?

MACK

Dumbness, I guess. An imbecilic
compulsion to stick my nose where it
don't belong. Why, has it ended
badly?

SIMON

No, man, it hasn't ended at all.
She's the best thing that's happened
to me in a long time.

MACK

Really? No shit.

SIMON

Yeah. So there you go, my friend,
sometimes things work.

MACK

Yeah?

SIMON

Yeah.

Mack thinks about that a few beats, enjoying it as he idly
dribbles the ball in place. Now he bounces the ball to Simon and
points to a line in the driveway.

MACK

Okay then. To twenty. Take it back
past that crack, winner takes it out.

SIMON

You sure? You may not get to shoot.

MACK

You're goin' down.

(pleased)

That's so cool about Jane.

SIMON

It's cool. That's why I came out here
tonight. I thought of a way to thank
you.

MACK

You don't have to thank me.

SIMON

No?

He fakes left and drives right around Mack, laying the ball in with ease. Mack is left holding his jock. Simon takes the ball back past the crack, dribbling easily and ready to go again.

MACK

Fuck. I may have to play defense.

(Simon laughs)

Maybe you better thank me.

SIMON

Yeah, well that's what I wanted to talk to you about. I had an idea--

Simon takes a jump shot from where he stands. SWISH. Mack retrieves the ball and bounces it back to Simon with a crooked glance. Simon begins bouncing it easily again. But this time Mack is poised to defend, watching his smiling opponent intently.

SIMON

If you're up for it, I thought of something I could do for you. Just to let you know I appreciate you--

Simon fakes right and goes left, driving around Mack. But this time, Mack is quicker. He picks Simon's pocket and ends up dribbling the ball himself, with a big grin. Simon's momentum carries him halfway to the basket, but when he turns around, he's laughing.

SIMON

-- introducing me to Jane.

We CUT WAY BACK to the end of the driveway. The two figures, bathed in floodlight, move gracefully about. Two grown men playing a game they both know well. The IMAGE HAS TURNED TO BLACK AND WHITE, and now--

The DARK SCREEN SLOWLY TURNS TO GOLD--

EXT. PARKING LOT (GRAND CANYON) --DAY

139

A big rented Van pulls into a spot, Simon in the driver's seat.

SIMON

End of the line, folks.

All the sundry doors open and out pile the occupants. From the passenger seat comes Jane, stretching her stiff legs. From the rear sliding door, hops Roberto, full of juice and quickly gone, and then Mack, sliding a baby carrier backpack over his shoulders. Claire is behind him now, carefully lowering the Baby into the backpack from her position in the van. That done, she comes out

and all the doors are SLAMMED SHUT with a kind of military cadence. They all WALK OUT OF FRAME, and we're looking at the empty Van.

EXT. SKYSCAPE (GRAND CNANYON) --DAY

1-

Blue sky and pillow white clouds highlighted with gold.

Roberto appears first, looking off, his face glowing gold. Then, sliding in alongside him, Simon and, held close under his arm, Jane. Then Claire and, finally, Mack and the Baby. Claire reaches up to straighten the hat on the Baby's head-- it is a tiny baseball cap from the Pittsburgh Pirates. With that in order, she looks where the Baby is looking, where they're all looking.

SIMON

What do you think?

MACK

I think... it's not all bad. Not at all.

We MOVE AROUND THEM now, and there, of course, just beyond the edge, is the endless, golden bowl of the Grand Canyon.

THE END